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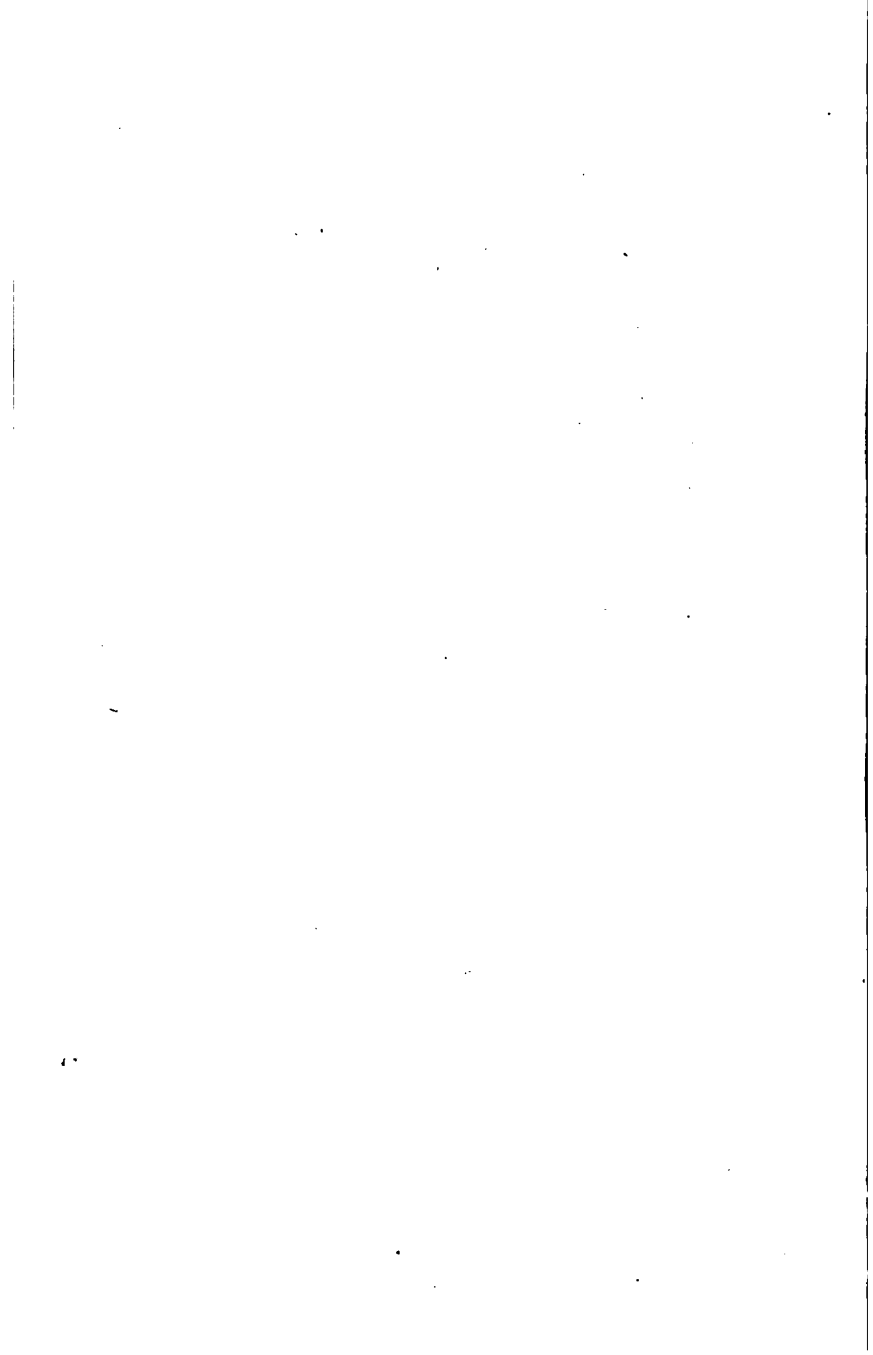
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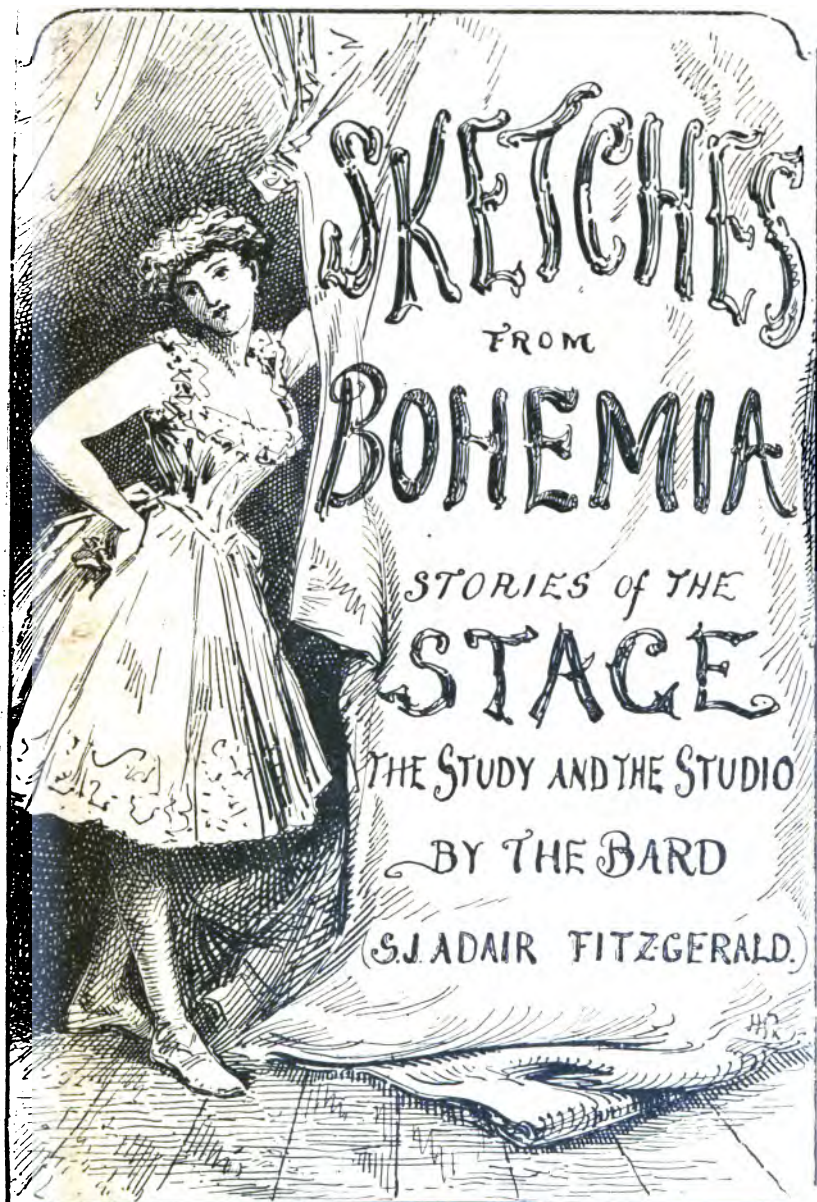
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*BEING STORIES  
OF THE STAGE, THE STUDY, AND THE STUDIO.*

BY  
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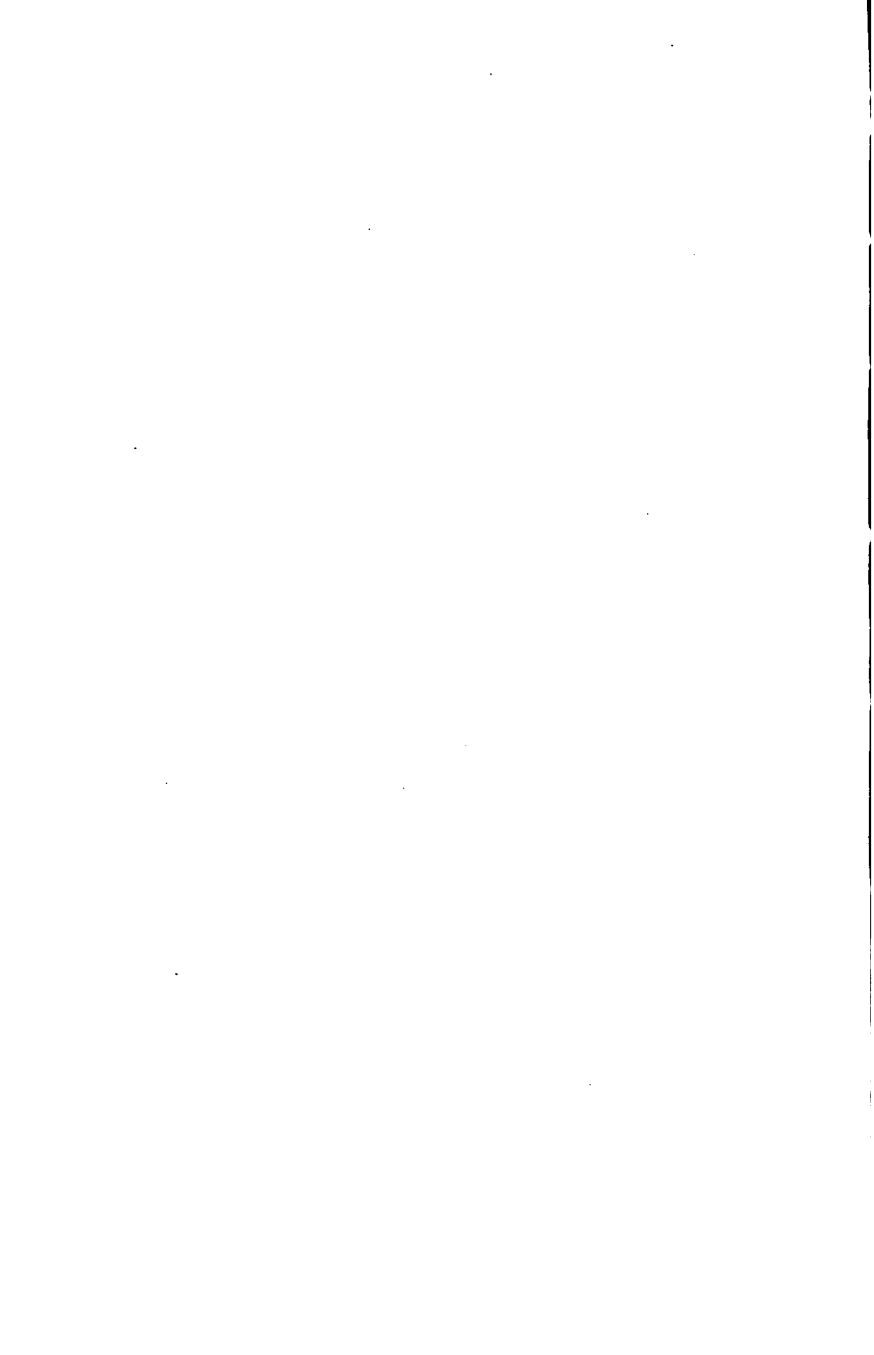
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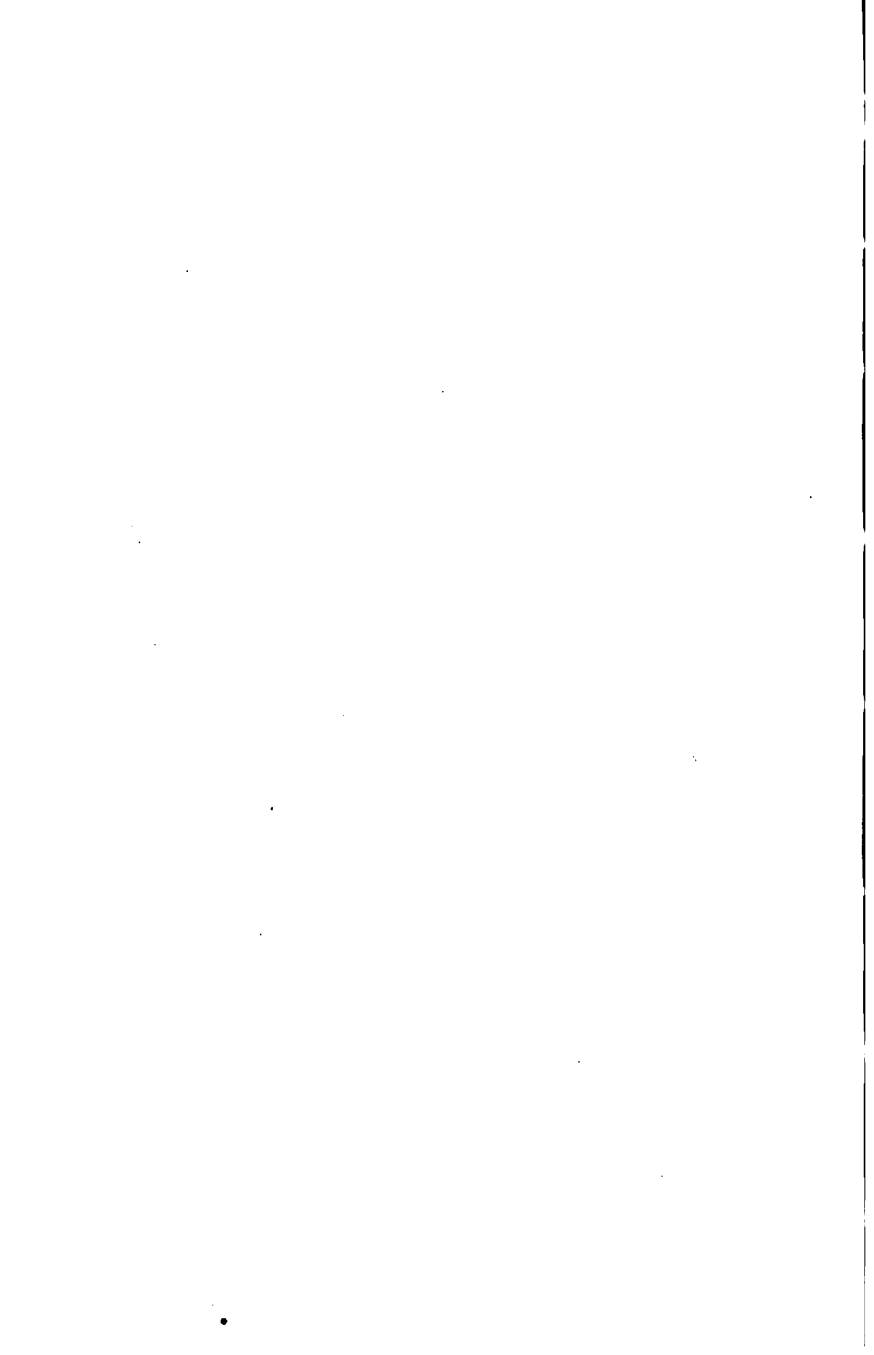
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WITH one or two exceptions, the whole of these Sketches originally appeared in *London*; and their success while running in that journal, and the interest they excited, have induced the Author to reproduce them in their present form. They are reprinted by the kind permission of the Editor. The article "Stage Slang," which has been included by request, first saw the light as a "turnover" in the *Globe*, the one on "Stage Superstitions" appeared in the *Evening Standard*, and "The Ladder of Fame" in the London Edition of the *New York Herald*; they are here inserted by the courtesy of the respective Editors. The Sketches and Stories, I may add, are almost entirely founded on fact.

S. J. A. F.



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## SKETCHES FROM BOHEMIA.

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### *PROLOGUE.*

IN the City of Brain, which is the Capital of the Land of Bohemia, there are many turnings and many hills and dales, and thus it happens that in the life of the average Bohemian there are so many ins and outs and so many ups and downs. It is the custom nowadays, in certain circles, to sneer at the mention of Bohemia, because, perhaps, there have been ragged and disreputable inhabitants of the far-famed sphere; because it has not altogether been exclusive; because a pedigree stretching from the days of William the Norman has not been, and is not, an absolute essential to gain admittance; and because Happy-go-lucky has too frequently been the passport and password. True it is that in days gone by Bohemia was rather a shady and a shabby community—almost as shady as some sections and classes in the world of Respectable Society; but we have changed all that, and though, as in all societies, there have been, and are, nondescript hangers-on, we cannot blink the fact that the Land of Bohemia has a real existence, and has been the nursery of some of the foremost and finest talents the world has yet seen or is ever likely to see. The Giants of Literature and Art have been suckled and reared in Bohemia, with all its poverty and raggedness; blank-eyed Despair has jostled Hope-gifted

Genius, and where success has rightly been sought success has been found. If the failures have been great, the successes have been greater; and those who have risen have gained strength and broader views by their residence in the Capital. But the outside world knows nothing of the City in their midst, or of the habits and customs, trials and struggles of the Citizens; and so of a few of these I shall try to tell, little extenuating, naught setting down in malice. It will be my mission deftly to lend to bold and unredeeming fact the fanciful fulness of fiction, and to shed upon cold statement the warming comfort of rounded periods and judicious flavouring. For of a verity there will be more truth than fable in the incidents I shall endeavour to relate, sad and sorrowful though many of them may be. Many may, perchance, recognise under the various disguises some of the characters and points that I shall present, but I shall take care not to wound susceptibilities, or raise cause for captious criticism. The names will be fictitious, and the dates unrecorded. And now to our stories of the trials and triumphs of those who worship at the shrines of Literature, Art, and the Drama.

## I.

### *VERY HARD TIMES.*

WHEN a man chooses a profession which requires of him little or no exertion of downright preparation and study, such as are necessary when going in for the Bar or Medicine, it not infrequently happens that capital has no voice in the choice, though the want of it may have an all-powerful influence. What actually drove George Marsland to pay his addresses to the comic Muses it would not be easy to say—perhaps because it was all he could pay when he first settled in Bohemia. Anyhow, to his most intimate friends he never opened his mind, and so the real reason was never known. He was a merry, light-hearted grig, quite unlike the lady novelists' descriptions of the humorous poet, for he was full of quips and cranks, whether at work or play, hard-up or "flourishing." When I first met him he was hard-up—deucedly hard-up; and how he lived was as great a mystery as a Bologna sausage. Being a jolly soul, it was only natural that he should choose as his boon companion in wealth and adversity the most gloomy and sallow-visaged individual ever seen this side of the tomb. While George Marsland was quite orthodox in his views—albeit he rarely indulged in the luxury of spiritual consolation in any but liquid form—his inseparable companion was a regular out-and-out iconoclast, a latter-day reformer, whose proclaimed mission was to invert the order of all things, human and perhaps divine. He railed against rank and riches and all things that be, and prated loudly and conscientiously of the rights and wrongs of man, and predicted a glorious time when all men

would be equal and all men would be above the pangs, not to say inconvenience, of poverty. And what was worthy of great respect in his character was that he thoroughly believed in his tenets and principles. He was no humbug. The theories he wrote and lectured upon he was completely persuaded were practical, and only needed time to bring them to perfection. And oftentimes he would walk to some hall in a distant suburb to lecture on his pet hobby—nay, more, the one great object of his life—and would raise up visions of comfort and ease for the delectation of his auditors what time he would not know where his next meal was coming from, or perchance where he would sleep that night. He was the son of a Canon, and, of course, had been turned from his paternal home for his so-called atheistical and revolutionary ideas.

He had known Marsland at college, and so when he drifted to London and they met one day at the B.M.—British Museum—they renewed their acquaintance, and having no means of any kind they resolved to share them together. So Marsland and Blackett lived thenceforth in one room, hard by the museum, contriving to pay instalments of their rent in a singularly erratic manner. They could neither of them obtain any regular engagement, with all their talents, and so they had to subsist on philosophical articles and comic poems as well as they were able. Sometimes Blackett would obtain a couple of guineas for a pamphlet that was to regenerate mankind, and oftener Marsland would triumphantly procure cheques for funny verses and stories that were calculated to make mankind burst itself laughing. But it was all such terribly uncertain work. Serious articles and books for the re-organization of society and the providing of all men with meat dinners on Saturdays as well as Sundays, such as Blackett wrote, were a drug in the market. Those whose position wanted bettering could not afford to buy books that would teach them the grand secret of obtaining

perpetual ease; and those who were in perpetual ease did not quite see the force of paying for theories, in volume form, with which they had no sympathy. As for Marsland, his opportunity had by no means arrived—there were such a number of young men hanging about Fleet Street quite as able and willing to supply the comic papers with all the “copy” editors would ever want; and an occasional half-guinea, or an accidental whole one, scarcely warranted a man in relying upon such sources for a constant replenishment of empty purses.

After a couple of years of this hand-to-mouth existence, with occasional breaks of short prosperity—just enough to put them almost on their feet again—even Marsland began to lose heart and despair of ever making a hit or of obtaining an appointment that would lift him out of the horrible slough of adversity into which he and his friend were sinking. Marsland had written a pantomime for a dishonest country manager, and had the mortification of knowing that his piece was filling the coffers of the theatre, while he was almost starving. Proper terms had been arranged, but it often happened in the days of which I am speaking that provincial managers were more eager to receive than to give, and the poor devil of an author was considered sufficiently paid by the glory of having his piece produced. Payment in cash was absurd. Some managers have this notion pretty well engrafted still, so I am informed. After repeated applications, Marsland actually received two pounds, the greater part of which had to go in rent for their one room, and then a most fearful run of bad luck set in. All the literary markets seemed crowded, and nothing could they get accepted. It was a heavy winter, and they were reduced to their last twopence. Their overcoats had long since departed; a fancy waistcoat belonging to Blackett had served them for breakfast; and now there was no prospect of anything for the rest of the day. The

twopence, after much discussion and deliberation, they expended on tobacco, to be used sparingly, and with a view to cogitation and inspiration. The day passed and nothing came, and in the morning, when the two arose and ruefully gazed upon the empty grate and empty cupboard, Marsland said :

"I tell you what it is, old boy—those 'bags' of mine will have to go. The knees are not a bit bulged, for they are, as you know, almost new. We must breakfast off 'em and dine off 'em. Take 'em, dear boy; yours are too far gone to raise the wind on—and don't take less than five bob."

They talked it over, and at last Blackett went out, and, after haggling for half an hour with the young man at "uncle's," returned minus Marsland's unmentionables, but in their stead a loaf of bread and a couple of bloaters and hard cash. They so far overcame the scruples of their landlady as to obtain another scuttle of coals on trust, and so they had a royal breakfast once more.

That day and many days Marsland remained in bed, taking exercise up and down the room, with a blanket wrapped round him, in African full dress. Then, when Marsland wanted to go out, Blackett had to hand over his trousers—luckily the two men were of a size—and stay in bed until Marsland should return. This sort of thing went on for a fortnight, and then Marsland's coat and waistcoat had to go to buy food. They were in a terrible plight—only one suit of clothes between the two, head over ears in debt to their landlady, and no apparent prospect of ever getting straight again! They had never been so reduced before, and they were sinking lower and lower every day. Why, if an appointment were offered, neither of them could accept it, for one had no clothes at all and the other was too shabby to present himself anywhere. Again and again they set their poor, over-worked wits to work to devise a means of getting money, however small the sum might be,

for soon they would have nothing left, and then naught but starvation stared them in the face. Their landlady, who was very poor herself, had been so kind to them that they could not in decency ask her to assist them any more. Blackett had tried all the sources he knew, and had failed. There was no money in the exchequer and only half a loaf in the cupboard. What was to be done?

"Let us change places," said Marsland; "I shall die if I stay here any longer. Lend me your clothes, and I will get money or work, or perish in the attempt." So Marsland dressed in Blackett's clothes and sallied forth once more to seek for money.

The next day when Blackett awoke he was horrified to find that Marsland had not returned. Could his friend have deserted him? Had he failed and done something desperate? Surely not—and yet, where could he be? Very wearily he went to the cupboard and cut himself a slice of bread and poured out a cup of cold tea. Then he went to bed again. Tried to do some writing, but was too unsettled, for all his thought was, "Where's Marsland?" The morning and the afternoon passed slowly away; the shadows began to fall, and night was fast creeping over the earth. He had no appetite to eat. He could only think, and his thoughts were maddening; presently he fell into a fitful slumber, from which he was aroused by what seemed a babel of voices.

"Come along, young shaver—steady with the nectar; to-night we will feast with the gods. Wake up, Blackey, the fatted calf is walking up stairs; and, here, take a draught of this beer!"

It was Marsland in the flesh, with fleshpots too, evidently. Blackett drank heartily of the beer first, and then inquired what the deuce the rumpus was all about. By this time mysterious parcels were reposing on the table, and Marsland was lighting the fire, talking away his hardest.



"Long lane that has no turning, old fellow. Get up. There's my clothes to put on—just got 'em out. Could not get back last night, and nobody to send. Met a man in Fleet Street. He was distraught. I suggested that the Cheshire Cheese was close by, so we adjourned. Finest place when you're distraught. Then he told me his woe. Fool of a sub-editor gone on the booze. Printers waiting for 'copy' and proofs—the *Glow-worm*, old fellow. My style of work. I helped him out of his difficulty—worked all night like sixty. Reward of the good and faithful servant in the morning: Shekels, more work. I could not refuse—afraid to, old chap. Too good to refuse anything. And now let's have some grub."

"I have tried to follow you. What happened next? I declare that beer makes me feel a man again," exclaimed Blackett, tucking into the ham and beef.

"Of course it does. Have another glass, and drink to my success as sub-editor of the *Glow-worm* henceforth from this day onward."

It was the flood in the tide of his affairs. From that moment Marsland began to mount the ladder, and at the present time he is one of the foremost humorous writers we have. Of course, he did not desert his friend Blackett, who for several years pursued his old idea of reforming society, and at last his turn came, and he was appointed the head of a new College of Progressionists. The two friends often meet and talk of the old days when they fought against poverty together, and their favourite toast is not unconnected with the usefulness of a pair of bags.

## II.

### THE OLD OCCIDENTAL.

To the present rising generation of Bohemians, if there are any real Bohemians coming into existence now, the name of the Occidental tells them as little as would the mention of the Old Coal Hole. Although but a few years have passed since it was demolished and ended for ever, it seems to be quite forgotten. And yet the Occidental, which rose from the ashes of the Coal Hole of notorious orgies and sing-songs, was at one time the most celebrated theatrical house in London, next to the still remaining Albion. Actors passing through the town never failed to give a look in to have a chat with the genial actor-proprietor, and to see some professional friend who might be a fixed star or satellite in town, or, perchance, resting till a shop offered, and they were always sure of being well received. The dining and general room was undoubtedly the largest in London, and the celebrated round table was big enough to accommodate King Arthur and all his court. In that room, at the time I am speaking of—say from twelve to fifteen, or even twenty years ago—the cleverest actors, dramatists, *littérateurs*, and prosperous Bohemians generally, would congregate to chat over the latest doings in the dramatic world and the world of art, and to discuss the successes of the day—actor, author, or play. Leading actors made the place their *rendezvous* in those times, and no matter when one dropped in during the afternoon, one was certain to find some big dramatic star surrounded by his worshippers, all eagerly listening to the words that fell from his lips.

Professional wits and wags were there in plenty, too, and many a new piece was conceived and sketched out in that old hostelry, where the wines and spirits and food could always be relied upon, and where you could always depend upon being served properly by the red-haired waiter, who grew to be quite an institution. Did not some of the wags christen him Eugene Aram because of there being a slight resemblance between that name and his own? What a motley crowd used to foregather, to be sure! Young wooers at the shrine of Fame, filled with ambition and lofty desire to conquer the fickle goddess, or die at her feet. Dramatic authors, with pockets bulging with plays that were to lead them on to Fortune; and perspiring poets inwardly singing the songs that were soon to be chanted through the town. Composers making final arrangements for their comic operas, and artists willing to draw anything, from a cork to a battlefield! And the quantity of folk whose exact connection with the politer arts it would be difficult to define. The cheery Bob Perch, who was always arrayed in spotless attire, and always drank "Barton, my dear. Half of Barton in a pewter!" And the energetic, and perhaps emphatic, young Scotchman, who had taken the amateur actor under his wing, and started one of the longest-lived journals devoted to amateur actors ever brought out; and when that died, how full of schemes he was, and what worlds he was ready to conquer if he only had the chance. He was the most constant visitor there, and knew more men in all walks of Bohemian society than any other individual I ever met. He was a good-natured, easy-going man, ready to say a smart thing, and occasionally to do a smart thing. His knowledge was extensive and peculiar, and yet, perhaps, not over-valuable from a monetary point of view. He was too restless to settle down to anything long, and may be in this he proved his own enemy. In course of time, however, he went his ways, and is now in the North somewhere, attached

to one of the provincial theatres. Then there was a brilliant young Irishman—indeed, the place swarmed with clever Hibernians; but this particular man was one of the smartest. He was no mean poet, and not a bad actor; but the flowing bowl was too much for him, and the last heard of him was that he drank himself to death at the Gold Fields. What a number of those witty companions crowd upon my memory as I write! Many of them have risen and are known to Fame at home and abroad. Many more, alas! have gone over to the majority, or have sunk into deathless oblivion. What tales were told in the winter afternoons from three till five or six! What jokes and yarns were spun! Don't you remember the old one that *Judy* printed, about the "out-of-shop" actor? "Mr. Attenborough is his uncle, and the Occidental is his haunt?" Thru for you. There were not many theatrical clubs in those days, and many actors and writers in high positions made the Occidental their club, and a right merry club it was. When I look back, I am astonished to think of the big guns who were always cannoning against each other in the private room that was so extensively decorated with portraits and pictures of bygone and latter-day favourites. Some of the funniest comedians of the age were to be met there, partaking of the cheering cup and the soothing weed. Juveniles were as plentiful as blackberries, and tragedy-merchants were well to the fore. It is true that a great many were representatives of what is now sneeringly termed the old school, but the old school was a good school for young actors to graduate in, for they were taught their business; whereas, nowadays, the stage aspirant seems to think that one swallow-tail coat makes a mummer, for dress is all they appear to trouble about.

I could, an I liked, give a list of visitors and frequenters of the Old Occidental that would take away the breath of some of the modern school.

Although actors and writers for the most part composed

the principal portion of those who used the house in Fountain Court, there were numbers from other professions as well. The law was *en evidence* in the form of aspiring barristers, and medical students demonstrated—too assertively sometimes—that the followers of *Æsculapius* were still advancing. What a rowdy lot medical students used to be, and what enormous quantities of the homely beer they could dispose of! They are not quite so rampageous now, but at one period for painting a peaceful town a lurid crimson there was nobody in it with the coming sawbones. It was all high spirits though, for they were a jovial and true-hearted set of fellows.

The beauty of the Occidental was that it was always Hail-fellow well met, whether you were in funds or out; and I have an idea that there were many afflicted with a plentiful lack of the ready article all the year round, for though prosperity was conspicuously to the front, there was adversity struggling valiantly in the rear.

And then a change began to come over the scene. The outside world began to penetrate into the inmost recesses of the club, stringent as they were about admitting strangers into the sacred room, and as the non-professionals crept in the real professionals went out, and gradually the old haunt knew them no more. Clubs were becoming popular, and to clubs they went. For awhile the old house fought bravely against the tide, but slowly and surely the place began to lose caste. Managers came who knew not the class they had to cater for, and so, after a hopeless endeavour to regain its lost position, its doom was sealed.

The place so rich in old associations and past grandness was eventually handed over to the destroyer: the once famous tavern was razed to the ground, and on its site sprung up the theatre that is known to all England as Terry's in the Strand, presided over by the popular comedian Edward of that ilk.

### III.

#### A TERRIBLE NIGHT.

THE chief actor in this sketch shall tell his own story, as he told it to me some years ago. He is now a popular comedian in the Colonies—the other man is dead.

I had not long been on the stage when the following thrilling event took place. My experience at the time was almost *nil*, my ambition and conceit were illimitable. I had joined the profession through the agency of a swindling manager, who started his tour with the money he obtained from stage-struck aspirants, male and female, who composed the major part of the company. We were to play the whole round of the legitimate, and popular dramas as well, with himself as the star; and on the Saturday night at the end of the first week I remember our bill consisted of *Turn Him Out*, *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, and *Bitter Cold*. A pretty fair evening's entertainment, I imagine. The pieces were, of course, very much cut; but we played them all, and were finished before eleven o'clock. This venture, I need hardly tell you, did not last long—the first week we each received only a few shillings for our share, the second week less still, and the third week nothing at all. But the next week our hopes considerably revived—for this reason:—We had been doing splendid business in a small town close to a racecourse, and as we were there during race week the theatre was crowded every night, and we rejoiced accordingly, being informed that on Saturday night we should be paid full salaries and a bit of what was owing. Now on the Saturday

night the manager, our star, was taken ill—at least, so he said—and his understudy played his part. He came round, however, during the performance, and said he felt all right again, and was going to his dressing-room to make up treasury for us. Alas! he had all the receipts in his pocket, and evidently went out of the theatre and out of the town while we were playing the second act of *Black-Eyed Susan*, for we never saw him again, and we were left without a *sou*—we were completely stranded, over a hundred miles from London. How the large company got out of the town I never knew, but I was compelled to remain until I heard from friends at home, for I was penniless, and had been living mostly on my wardrobe. Another company, however, opened up at the theatre on the Monday, so I went to the manager and explained my position. He had not any opening just then, but generously offered me a pound a week to make myself useful, which I was glad enough to do. It was in this company that I met the most erratic man it has ever been my lot to know. A remarkable man, and, in his way, a genius, this Alfred Monk. He was well-educated, refined, and entirely a gentleman. His love for the stage had induced him to run away from home, and, as his people were of Methodist proclivities, they, with true Christian principles, cut him altogether. He played heavies, lead, and low comedy just as he was required, for the *répertoire* of the company was extensive and eccentric; and as he was, without exception, the best actor in the crowd, no matter what he played, he had matters pretty much in his own hands. One night he would play Hamlet, and the next Bob Acres, without so much as a wink. And he was so good in each that it was difficult to say which was appreciated most. As an actor he was simply a marvel, and his great versatility, as he bitterly acknowledged himself, was his curse and his ruin. He was about thirty-five when I first met him, and we struck up acquaintance at once. He was exceedingly

kind to me, and, after awhile, through his exertions, I secured a regular engagement in the company. He was always most kind to me, and initiated me into the mysteries of making-up, and instructed me in the groundwork and details requisite for the turning out of a presentable actor. We used to lodge together, and I was impressed with his extreme abstemiousness from alcoholic liquors. For weeks I looked upon him as being almost a teetotaler, till one Saturday night he turned up at the theatre terribly intoxicated, and then I learnt from an old actor that he was subject to fits of intemperance, and had had *delirium tremens* twice. This made me nervous, more especially as the next week he continued to drink heavily, though he was always able to play his part, and perhaps acted better even than when he was sober. I did not know what to do—he was becoming a nuisance, and I was almost afraid to live with him. I spoke to the manager, who was also manifestly distressed, though he tried to allay my fears, and told me he would soon be all right again. He had not broken out, as far as he knew, for over three months. However, a fortnight passed, and the third week of his debauch commenced, and I determined not to live with him after leaving that town. And yet he had taught me so much, and been so kind to me, that I felt I could not desert him. It was a sort of hereditary madness that seized him, I was told, and, after all, he might stop at any moment, when the temporary craze would pass away. His intentions were always so good—almost noble—but, alas! his resolution was weak, and the craving for drink once started, it could never be known when it would be overcome, or cease.

On the Thursday night of this week he arrived at the theatre worse than ever he had been—and yet not altogether unsteady on his legs—but there was a strangeness in his manner, and a wildness in his gaze, that made us all instinctively draw back when he descended to the stage,



ready dressed, to go on. And what was more alarming than all, although he went through his part all right, he did not appear to recognise any of us. Once, as I stood at the wing watching him going through his performance, he came to the side and whispered to me, quite in a rational manner: "I'm going to do it to-night!" and then he went on with the business of the piece again. To what he referred or meant I could never understand. I finished that night early in the last act, and, as I hurried to my dressing-room to take off the war paint, I resolved to get him home as quickly as possible, and get a doctor to see him. I hardly knew what I feared, though it was patent to us all that he was on the verge of delirium.

When I was dressed I waited for him at the wings, and when the curtain fell I saw him stagger for the first time that evening as he went off R. instead of L. as usual. I rushed round the stage to meet him, as he was bound to cross to get to his dressing-room, but somehow I missed him. I tore back to his dressing-room, but he had not been there. I went down to the stage door-keeper—no, he had not passed—nobody had left the theatre. I was becoming distracted. Where had he gone? I hunted for him high and low, but failed to find him. It was getting late, and the actors were leaving the theatre. I made one effort to find him, and went round to the right of the stage again, and there I saw a narrow doorway and staircase that led to beneath the stage. I got a lamp and descended, and groped my way along as well as I could; but the place was so fearfully dark that I stumbled over some old scenery, and my light was extinguished in the fall. I scrambled to my feet, uncertain what to do. Should I abandon the search, and leave him wherever he might be, or still try to seek him out—for it was very certain he was still in the theatre? After a little cogitation I returned to the stage to get a fresh light. To my horror I found all the gas turned out, the place de-

sented, and I was shut in. I tried to get out, but found all the doors locked and bolted. There was no hope for it—I should have to pass the night in a dressing-room. But was I alone? Where was my friend? I found a match—the last one I had—and re-lit the lamp. Then I once more went below the stage. He might have gone down there, and might have fallen asleep. I crept along as well as I was able, and at last came to an old property room. I paused on the threshold and listened. I could hear the heavy breathing of a man who seemed to be asleep. I shaded the light, and there, in a far corner, I could see Alfred Monk, lying down asleep, still dressed in the character of his part, too. He was safe. I went silently in and placed the lamp on a bench, and waited. The sleep would do him good, I thought. And then I seemed to be overpowered myself, so I lay down on an old couch and closed my eyes. I know not how long I had been in that position, but when I awoke some one was standing over me with a gleaming knife—it was Monk! His eyes were glaring with the unnatural fire of madness, and I dared not move. Presently he raised the knife as though about to stab, and, with one supreme effort, I rose and struck him with all my strength on the forehead. He fell to the ground and lay quite still, with the knife firmly grasped in his right hand. Had I killed him, or only stunned him? He began to move, and fearing another encounter, for he was twice as powerful as myself ordinarily, and now was stronger than ever with all the vitality of delirium, I moved warily to the other end of the apartment, resolved to reach the door and so escape. But he seemed to guess my motive, though I could not see that he was looking at me: he went deliberately to the door and closed it! Then he returned to the bench, and took up the lamp that was still flickering. I could feel my heart beating against my ribs. What was he going to do? He mumbled to himself, and appeared to be making up his mind. His back was towards me.

The lamp must be secured, or he might burn the place down.

I made one move forward, and clutched him by the throat. In an instant he shook me off, and threw the lamp on to a heap of waste paper and property rubbish, and we were in darkness. But not for long, for presently a flame burst up from the litter, and one end of the apartment seemed all on fire; and then for the first time I noticed a grating that looked up into the street, and a rush of joy thrilled my heart. If I could only get to that corner, I might attract attention. Meanwhile the rubbish was burning fiercely, and Monk was dancing round it, gesticulating and talking fiendishly. I could bear the suspense no longer. Unless the flames were smothered speedily the woodwork would catch, and the theatre would be on fire. I gathered up some sacking that lay on the floor, and rushed to the heap before Monk could divine my intention, and before he could interfere I had thrown myself on the blazing heap, and partially extinguished it. The flames were deadened, and only the remains smouldered. With a cry of baffled rage Monk darted upon me with his murderous knife, and, self-preservation being the first law of nature, I wrenched the leg off the bench, and struck him down once more. This time he did not move for some minutes, and I screamed aloud for help through the grating, down which the morning light was beginning to stream. However, Monk was not done for yet; and just as I reached the door, having failed to attract any notice through the grating, he rose and darted after me. I pulled the door open and fled, he coming after me full pelt, still brandishing that horrible knife. After a fearful race up and across the stage, I felt him gaining upon me every second; I could hear the panting of his breast; I could feel his hot breath upon my neck; when, with one last spring forward, I gained the stage door just as it was opened by a policeman, and I fainted away.

When I came to, they told me that Monk was in custody ; but as he proved to be hopelessly mad, he was conveyed to an asylum, where he lingered on a maniac for some years, when he died.

I was none the worse for my experiences of that night ; but, I tell you, I am not looking out for any more stage realism of that kind.

#### IV.

##### AN AGREEABLE RATTLE.

THERE are butterfly people who lead a merely ephemeral existence in all grades, and in Bohemia there are, perhaps, more fugitive folk than in any other. Their real object and occupation in life, if they have any, are never known. They flit about and come and go like Will-o'-the-Wisps, and when they depart for good they are rarely missed, for they are rarely wanted. Marmaduke Arthur Maddox was a curious young man of rather effeminate manner and appearance, with violet-blue eyes like a girl's and short crisp curly hair that was invariably parted in the centre. Presumably, he had a small private income from his dear grandmamma, of whom he was always prating; at any rate, he followed no profession, and consequently, as is the taste with such transitory beings, he tried to cling on to the fringe of half a dozen. He painted a little, and acted a little, and he also wrote for the press a little—a very little in each case. His confidence and innocence were touching, and, as he was quite harmless, actors out of a shop, and scribblers on the look-out for something to turn up, never disdained to partake of refreshment at his expense. He was generally called Mammie, as much because his initials were M.A.M. as on account of his feminine eccentricities. At the Occidental, or the Cheese, or any hostelry patronised by *the* profession, he was almost always to be found during the afternoon. In the evening he vanished from the fascinations of the Strand. Had he possessed any real talent for the stage, he might have made a decent light comedian, for he had all the tricks of the Charles Matthews'

school and a sharp, rapid, jerky delivery that was really amusing off the stage. On the stage, alas! he was a veritable stick. He never played at any regular theatre for remuneration, but was always willing to make it worth a *bénéficiaire's* while to cast him for a small part in a farce, for he was generous enough with his cash, and bought tickets with an ease that quite warmed the hearts of the actors, who were continually getting up scratch performances at outlying halls and theatres. He was always pestering journalists and literary men to accept something from his pen; and sometimes, as his prose, by altering and boiling down, became tolerable, and as he was always sure to buy a couple of hundred copies of any paper in which his effusions appeared, for distribution amongst his friends, editors with a limited circulation occasionally spared him a corner. He was also useful in this way as an advertisement for a new journal, or one that was on its last legs. But though his prose was tolerable, his verse, without exception, was execrable. And as there was not one paper in town that would take his "poetry" at any price, he decided to shame his detractors by publishing a volume on his own account. He did so, and gave every blessed copy away to his friends and acquaintances. I forget the title of the collection, but I remember reading all the "poems" piously, and enjoyed them thoroughly—the serious pieces were so funny.

Poor Mammie! what a lot of chaff he had to put up with and how splendidly he endured it all! After listening to a fearfully scathing criticism from one or other of the boys, generally a low comedian who would assume a tragic air for the occasion, he would say: "Really—think so? Hum! Wants more polish; I must read up a bit. *What will you drink?*" But some of the men were really brutal in their remarks; and though he scarcely ever resented the liberties that were taken, or the cruelty of the observations that were made, it was not difficult to see that he felt it all, and he did

not forget. He took no open revenge, but he was cunning, and paid out his enemies in this way: When any particular enemy was by, and he knew that that enemy was hard-up, he asked others in his presence to take drinks with him, and even dinners, totally ignoring the one he wished to pay out. It was a peculiar revenge, but it had its effect.

Naturally, he was a great bragger, and was everlastingly talking of the things he was going to do and which he never did. He was not usually given to satire, but on one occasion he had been playing for a benefit, as an amateur (for, to give him his due, though he boasted of his histrionic abilities, he always entered himself an amateur), and somebody said to him, "Hallo! shaved off your moustache? Why, you look a regular pro. now."

"Good heavens! will people think I'm an actor? Then I'll grow it again at once." And he did, too. A little of Marmaduke Maddox, however, went a long way. His conceit was insufferable, and his eternal gabble was "I—I—I," and yet again "I."

One irritable man said to him one day, when he was ogling a barmaid who had evidently made up her mind to catch him: "Move aside, Betty Martin, and let me have my malt."

"Why Betty Martin, pray?" he asked.

"Oh, because you are all my 'I.'"

Of course he had written a play. This goes without saying, because every other man one meets in Bohemia and out of Bohemia has perpetrated a play, or intends doing so the first opportunity. It is such an easy thing to write a play—that's how it is so many successful ones occur at *matinées*. But Marmaduke Maddox had not written an ordinary play—it was an historical one, and quite extraordinary. Marmaduke invented his own history, so that the critics should have no cause to quarrel with him for distorting facts or mixing up dates. He sent it to every theatre in London,

including the burlesque houses, and some there were who said his tragical piece had all the elements that go towards making a lively extravaganza. But these were callous souls who had no sympathy with poetic drama. After every manager had promptly declined the honour of making their fortunes by producing Mammie's play, he came to the fateful resolve of producing it himself. From first to last he must have wasted £500 over that play. Instead of giving it a chance by engaging a competent manager to see to the production, he engaged, in the goodness of his heart, all the out-of-shop second-rate actors he knew, and a worse crew for the representation of kings, princes, and soldiers was never got together. In a sense they might be compared to Falstaff's own particular army. They could no more deliver blank verse—and Marmaduke's verse was exceptionally blank—than they could fly; and as for a martial air, why, they weren't up to the average militia. It was always a marvel where he had collected such a crowd, seeing that competent mummers were walking about dying for an engagement. However, he had his own way, in spite of genuine advice and friendly remonstrances, and he insisted upon playing the principal part himself—a kind of Prince Hal gone wrong. And he did not hide his light under a bushel either. He spent ridiculous sums in advertising his piece in the daily and weekly papers, and in posters, and looked forward to making a great sensation. He was not disappointed in this respect. He did make a sensation, though somehow I don't think it was the sort he anticipated.

Tickets for the performance were scattered broadcast, and a very full house on the occasion was the result. But, oh! that performance. It was *awful*. I fancy there were about ten changes of scene in each act. There were several deliberate murders, but none so deadly as those committed by the actors, and Marmaduke was the most sanguinary of the lot. The scenery somehow all went wrong. Flats refused



to join, and cloths declined to arrange themselves decently or in order; but the climax came when some waggish member behind the scenes gave the order to lift a cloth at the back of the stage, when was brought to view the scene-shifters and carpenters in their shirt-sleeves, arranging the battle-field, which was to be the last scene of all. So it was, for chaos reigned, and, amid a tremendous hubbub, the curtain was lowered, and excited dead-heads screamed aloud for the author. And would you believe it? Marmaduke Maddox came on smiling, and delivered a speech thanking everybody for assisting at so glorious a triumph.

Somebody must have told him that it wasn't such a very glorious triumph, at any rate the papers did, and Marmaduke disappeared for ever from the Strand. Presumably he went home to his grandmother, and settled down in the country. However, wherever he went he never came back, and I don't think anybody grieved for his loss, except, perhaps, a few of his regular spongers.

## V.

### *THE STORY OF A PICTURE.*

#### I.

Most people voted her beautiful, with the beauty more of a statue than a human living being. She was above the medium height, and her figure was commanding, while her general appearance was impressive. Yet she was cold, and could be arrogant when she liked; and there was a deep, restless cunning in her almost colourless eyes that puzzled students of physiognomy, and made them shake their heads. On the other hand, she could be as agreeable and witty as the highest of her sex are always reported to be, and an impressionable man would leave her society convinced that she was an angel, and was destined to make some lucky wight happy one of these days, little guessing that she was already engaged to be married. Pauline Davey was the daughter of a weak, inoffensive mother, and a fiery, short-tempered father, the latter a major in the army, long since retired from military and mundane life. Her mother was almost a nonentity, and entirely at her daughter's mercy. The two lived on the remnant of a small fortune, and travelled about from place to place to suit their whim and fancy, or rather Pauline's whims and fancies.

Contradictory and scheming as Pauline's character was, she was greatly attached to a young artist—Jasper Carewe by name. He was a clever young fellow, but had yet to make his mark. If he would only achieve fame, position, and money quickly, Pauline would marry him, as she had told him times out of number. It was the uncertainty of

his ever being anything more than a struggler that affected her, and made her wonder whether she was wise, after all, in permitting her affection to override her prudence. Oh, if she only had money!

Those who knew Pauline thoroughly could not understand her attachment and loyalty to the unknown Bohemian painter, for she was exceedingly ambitious, and cynics there were who said she was capable of selling her soul to gain her object, whether good or bad. Truly her affection seemed a contradiction, and showed how unfathomable is a woman's nature. Jasper Carewe was more a dreamer than a practical man, and never saw the defects in his sweetheart that were discernible to the majority of her intimate acquaintances, and their engagement was not known to many—only to a few friends who were known to both.

## II.

It was the end of the London season. Jasper Carewe had gone on a walking tour with a brother artist through Devonshire and Cornwall, while Pauline had accepted, with her mother, an invitation to stay with some friends at Scarborough. Next season Jasper Carewe was to send into the Academy a portrait of Pauline which he had already been engaged upon some time, and with that and some other pictures that would be completed by then he hoped to make a real start on the road to fame.

At Scarborough Pauline was in her glory, and did not seem to retain very much remembrance of the touching and pathetic scene she had had with her lover in his studio just before they parted, while he, poor fool, dreamt and thought of nothing else. Pauline was a great favourite everywhere, and she did her best to be attractive. Each morning, as she went to bathe, she had noticed a rather elderly gentleman walk in the same direction whence she came, with a fragile, fair-haired girl of about seventeen. She merely wondered

who they were without taking much interest in them, until, one morning, the sea being rougher than usual, fewer ladies ventured out. She, however, being a dexterous and daring swimmer, rather enjoyed the angry waters than otherwise. This particular morning, while she was gambolling in the foam, she was startled to see the fair young girl alluded to above bathing from the next machine to her own. And the girl seemed to be getting out of her depth. Pauline called to her to return. There was no answer, and the girl sank beneath the waves. Quicker than thought Pauline swam to her rescue, and brought her safely, though she was unconscious, back to the machine, and this led to an introduction to the elderly gentleman, who vowed that she had saved his daughter's life, and he would always be her friend.

Thenceforward the three were inseparable, and at the end of the visit, instead of returning to London, Pauline and her mother went to the north of England as the guests of this elderly gentleman. To be brief, Pauline went there as his promised wife. To be a lady of title had long been a dream with her, but she had hitherto treated it simply as a dream, and now it would be a reality! She would marry Sir George Garfail, Baronet, and be the mistress of his ancestral home and the thousands that were his income. She was sorry for Jasper—but what could she do? It would be flying in the face of Providence not to marry Sir George, who was so good and kind, and—over sixty years of age! Yes, she even thought of that—at sixty people can't live very long, and then she would be a rich widow. Well, when an old man buys a young wife he cannot expect much affection—love, of course, is entirely out of the question.

To Jasper she made excuses for not returning to town. He could get on with her picture, now that she had given sittings for all the chief points, and when it was done she would come and see him. She wrote to him with just as much affection as of yore—perhaps with more tenderness,

and he went on loving and worshipping her with all the ardour of his passionate nature, never for one moment suspecting her of double-dealing.

So the weeks sped away. She acted the hypocrite to Sir George, and enslaved the enraptured old man, who insisted that they should be married early in the year. Pauline, with a slight sigh, agreed. Sir George had said that she must have her picture painted, and then she told him that Jasper Carewe was already painting it for her, adding that he was a young artist whom they all wished to encourage.

"Very well," said Sir George, "and I will pay for it. What shall we give?"

A sudden thought struck Pauline. She would get as large a sum as possible, and so by that way make amends to Jasper. Some people think that money will heal all wounds. Pauline did, for instance, because almost her sole thought now was money, and this very money that she got for him proved her own downfall. And so many women are like her.

"What do you think I am worth?" she asked ingenuously, and with a coquettish air.

"No sum would be too large. You will ruin me if I pay for your picture according to your worth. Is the young man very poor?" said Sir George gaily.

"Yes," answered Pauline quickly, "very—and a few hundreds would be like a gift from Heaven."

"A few hundreds! Young artists don't get very much for their first pictures; but there, as you are his champion, I will give him two hundred and fifty pounds; and if we are very pleased afterwards with the work, I will give two hundred and fifty more."

And thus it was settled. But how was Pauline to let Jasper have the money without his knowing the truth? Sir George must not communicate with him, or she would be found out. Ah! she would ask him to let her send the

money when the time came. Meanwhile, she must try and get the picture.

## III.

It was not an easy matter, for Jasper did not at all enjoy the absence of his sweetheart—and said so. Thereupon Pauline decided to work upon his feelings. She wrote him that she was very unwell—nothing serious, though the doctor had said that to leave her present comfortable quarters would be madness. So her falseness and his faith prevailed, and he finished the picture as speedily as he could and sent it to her, on the understanding that he was to have it back to send to the Academy. The day it arrived Sir George received a letter calling him to Paris on most important business, and he was compelled to depart without delay. At Pauline's request he wrote out a cheque and gave it to her to pay for the picture. The cheque was for two hundred and fifty pounds, made payable and not crossed, to Jasper Carewe. Now came Pauline's most difficult task. She had to write and send the cheque to Jasper, and the only way to explain it was by confessing everything. She wrote a plaintive letter and told all that had happened since she had left London—how that she had deceived him and had accepted Sir George Garfail. Owing her own fearful duplicity was a terrible task; but she did it in pathetic, well-feigned words, and threw herself on his mercy.

In three days came back the reply—her own letter and the cheque—and not one word, either one way or the other. This was more than she bargained for. "He has taken it to heart too much. Oh, if I had never seen Sir George—or had never promised Jasper! What can I do? That cheque—it must be endorsed and passed through the bank, or Sir George will discover my secret. What shall I do?" she cried wildly. "It is useless to appeal to Jasper—I cannot—I dare not! Suppose—suppose. Why not? Sir George does not

know his writing, and I do! I could imitate it! The money I do not want, and can contrive some means of giving it to Jasper later on. Yes, that is what I must do!"

She took two days to make up her mind, and it was owing to a letter coming from Sir George that made her resolve on her course of action. The cheque was drawn on a Manchester bank. Manchester was only ten miles from Sir George's mansion. So Pauline persuaded her mother to accompany her on a shopping expedition, and together they went. While Mrs. Davey was trying on a new mantle, Pauline, two doors off, closely veiled, was standing at the banker's desk.

"All in notes, Madame? Thank you. Five fifties. Cheque payable to Jasper Carewe. Yes, I see it is endorsed; thank you!"

And Pauline passed into the street.

A few days afterwards Sir George returned from Paris, and the preparations for the marriage were commenced in earnest.

#### IV.

But they were to be disappointed for the present. Sir George's business in Paris was far from settled, and he had to go away again. Pauline was disturbed. Her conscience was pricking her terribly. This delay seemed like an omen, but she tried to shake off her superstitious fears and make the best of it. When Sir George Garfail reached town, he found that he had just missed the train for Dover, and so to while away the time he thought he would call upon "that young artist fellow," and he called!

He saw Jasper Carewe, who was a mere wreck through wretchedness and heartache. It did not take long for the whole truth to be told. Pauline's true character came out in glaring colours, albeit Jasper Carewe simply told the truth. It was through Sir George's saying, almost on his

entry, "I see you got my cheque," that caused the exposure. For Jasper explained that he had not endorsed or cashed it—that he had left it on his table in a letter addressed to Miss Pauline Davey, for the landlady to post. The landlady said a young man who used to lodge there had posted it—but the young man was not to be found. He had been out of work a long time. Suppose he had found out what was in the letter and had committed forgery?

"Clear as the day," said Sir George, and the detectives were put on the track at once. For, badly as she had behaved, they both said that Pauline could never be guilty of such an atrocious and vulgar crime. It was more than an insult to think of such a thing. Of course, Pauline received intimation that certain facts in connection with her former engagement to Mr. Carewe, and her subsequent deception to both, having come to light, she would be able to consider herself at liberty to do as she pleased, and was recommended to terminate her visit at once.

Pauline fell ill, but her mother nursed her through, and when she was better she thought a change on the Continent would do them both good. Pauline could not guess how much or what Sir George Garfail knew; she was only certain of one thing, and that was that she had lost a husband—the chance of two, in fact. She would leave the country for a year or so, in case the scandal should leak out.

They had already taken tickets, and were waiting on the platform at Charing Cross, when a quiet, groom-looking man stepped up, and said respectfully, "Miss Pauline Davey?"

"Yes, that is my name. What do you want?"

"Very sorry, Miss, but you must come with me. I have a warrant for your apprehension."

"A warrant—what do you mean? A warrant—what for?"



"Forgery. You forged the name of Jasper Carewe to a cheque drawn by Sir George Garfail."

There was no need to say more. Pauline had fainted.

V.

The court was crowded. Sir George Garfail, when he heard whom the detectives had arrested, was distracted. Had he known, for the sake of what she had been to him the short while he had known her, he would have withdrawn the charge. And Jasper Carewe suffered, if anything, more than the baronet; but the Public Prosecutor had stepped forward and taken up the matter, because an innocent man had very nearly been imprisoned for the crime—the young man who had owned to posting the letter. It was partly owing to Pauline's mother, during Pauline's illness, coming across the five fifty-pound notes. Being pushed for money, she took two of them, and cashed them, believing, of course, that they were her daughter's legitimate property. The detectives traced them; more, they found a piece of paper at Sir George's house on which Pauline had practised the signature, and the rest was easy.

The court was crowded. Almost the whole of the painful story came out bit by bit, and poor Jasper Carewe had to stand in the witness-box and give evidence against his old sweetheart, whom he had loved so truly. He almost broke down, and so did Sir George. Only the prisoner stood calm, almost impassive, and dead to what was taking place. Link by link the facts came out, until the proof of her guilt was so strong that the judge summed up without hearing all the witnesses, and concluded with these words after the jury had given their verdict :

"And the prisoner at the bar is sentenced to two years' imprisonment—a terrible retribution, indeed. May it prove a lesson to last her all her life."

At this point there was a scream in court—the old

baronet had fainted; and the prisoner, with one convulsive sob, was led away to the cells.

What became of Pauline Davey was never heard, though her story is well known in certain circles. Jasper Carew is one of the most prominent artists of the day, and has seemingly got over the painful episode of his earlier days, for he is the husband of a very pretty wife and the father of several happy children.

## VI.

### *TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE REDIVIVUS.*

SAMUEL WARREN'S "Ten Thousand a Year" always had a peculiar fascination for me—the characters are so faithfully drawn from life that I can always picture the individuality of the personages represented; but Tittlebat Titmouse used to seem to me to be too much of a caricature. Was it possible, I used to ask myself, that such an utterly snobbish cad as Titmouse could exist in real life? Until I met Sir Tommy Maxwell, I opined not. When I had the extraordinary honour of being introduced to this remarkable baronet, I concluded that Samuel Warren knew what he was about, for Sir Tommy was Titmouse to the life—revived in the living flesh. He was a consummate outsider! Properly speaking, he in no way belonged to Bohemia; but, as he thrust himself into the precincts of the stronghold, he deserves mention as being the personification of downright insignificance. Originally, he was employed in some warehouse in the city; he used to say he was a confidential clerk; but if he ever rose above the post of clerk and messenger, I am very much mistaken. His education was surprisingly defective, and his twang was that of the cockney bred and born. The title fell to him owing to a startling epidemic of death among the male Maxwells, and they were all a hard-drinking, fast-living lot—and so he, a cousin about a hundred times removed, slaving for his pound or twenty-five shillings a week, suddenly found himself heir to a baronetcy and—nothing else. The estates were all swallowed up, and with the title there was a mere hundred and fifty pounds in hard

cash, as the remains of what was undoubtedly once a fine property. Of course, so grand a personage as Sir Tommy Maxwell, Bart., could no longer demean himself by working for his living, so he threw up his situation and became a man about town! Well, he was always about town—about Fleet Street and the Strand mostly, where he speedily became the butt of all with whom he came in contact. His precise position and income were unknown at first, and it was thought he was nothing more than a titled imbecile with an uncommon amount of bad taste and brag about him. He was fair-haired, fair-eyed, and horribly disproportioned. His clothes were of tolerable quality, but badly cut and badly worn, and his manners were boorish in the extreme. Somehow, you could not go anywhere without meeting him, and he invariably had one or two toadies with him, drinking, and smoking, and flattering him. Of course the company sharks got hold of him for his name, and as they paid him, perhaps, two or three pounds a week for the use of it on their bogus prospectuses, for a time he was in clover, and it was surprising how well he aped the faults and follies of the class to which it is presumed his title should have permitted him to belong. He was one of those men for whom you could only have disgust and abhorrence, and personally, after a few *rencontres*, I had nothing to do with him. I never could associate with a creature whom I so heartily despised, but I heard of him a very great deal.

One anecdote about him will explain the style of person he was.

“What have you got in that basket?” inquired some one at a restaurant.

“Oh, that’s a little fish for her ladyship!”

This excited not only ridicule, but a desire also on the part of one of the men present to investigate the matter, and to see what the basket really contained. At last Sir Tommy

deposited it on a chair, and it was immediately seized, and the contents brought surreptitiously to light.

A bloater and three potatoes! Fish, indeed, for her ladyship. These were removed, and the basket was filled up with cinders and coals, with which the unsuspecting baronet walked proudly away! As he was constantly talking so loudly about his mansion—Claremont Park—two or three men, up for any fun that might happen, eventually accepted his invitation to go home with him and dine at the Park. The “park” was situated somewhere in the wilds of Battersea; and thither the party wended their way. When at last they came upon Claremont Park, they discovered it to be a row of third-rate cottages, and at Sir Tommy’s residence her ladyship was down on her knees cleaning the steps!

Those men desired to inquire no further, but more in sorrow than in anger they took their departure, leaving Sir Tommy to the tender mercies of her ladyship’s tongue, and, from all accounts, her ladyship was a regular shrew and virago rolled into one. What a wretched existence the two must have led—she a virago, and he a mean-spirited, vile little cad. Perhaps if that wretched title had not come to disturb their lives, they would have got along all right; but the title proved their ruin—at least it did Tommy’s.

Sir Tommy’s name soon came prominently before the public in connection with several bogus companies that burst, and then certain tradesmen began to demand payment for goods supplied him. By some means or the other, the first of these swindles, for they were nothing more nor less from beginning to end, was hushed up, and Sir Tommy posed as a martyr. But unprincipled people—people without the least idea of honour—don’t look well as martyrs, so Sir Tommy tried another dodge, for the baronet had much of the rogue in his composition. He started a company on his own account, and that portion of the British public who

are always ready to fall down and worship a title were easily caught, and suffered accordingly. This latest matter might have passed off as an unfortunate speculation, only the "worthy baronet" had been detected in doing shady things on the turf, and he was also charged with receiving goods under false pretences, and so he was arraigned in a common police-court to answer for his misdemeanours. It has escaped me what sentence he received—two years' hard labour probably—but I do know that he was no longer a loungeur in Fleet Street and the Strand, and it is believed at the expiration of his term he made his way to the backwoods of America and tried business as a shanty-man. Then, again, a rumour was floated to the effect that he was a waiter in New York, and later still, that he was a racecourse tout and hanger-on. This last occupation is the most feasible. I have since learned that he died in abject poverty some years ago. America seems the home of broken-down members of the English aristocracy. They have several noble lords over there filling very minor positions—one scion of a noble house is said to be "boots" at an hotel! Freedom can't go much further than having noble lords to call one in the morning and to black one's boots—and some of them are not fit for that! The strangest part about this brief sketch is its perfect veracity in almost every detail.

## VII.

### *THE BROKEN HEART.*

HAROLD ARMSTRONG, though an exceptionally powerful and incisive writer, experienced even more than the average difficulty in getting a work brought out. He was a constant contributor of short stories to the magazines and weekly periodicals, and yet no publisher would venture to publish one of his novels, and he had written many. The fact is the market was inundated with trashy books largely brought out at the author's own expense; and as these kept the minor publishers busy, and assured them small but certain profits, they would not speculate in any daring departure in the field of literature. And Armstrong's departures were daring in their brilliancy and scheme. He had no sympathy with the milk-and-water stories that so many writers, male and female, but mostly the latter, are everlasting rushing into print; and as these, with few exceptions, were the only sort in request, he could obtain no real opening. Perhaps he would have been wiser had he bowed to the popular taste, and provided the orthodox pabulum; but he had his own views, and was determined to wait his time. He wanted to emulate the giants of fiction, and not the pigmies, whose works were read for a season and then heard of no more.

Publishers read his manuscripts, it is true. Those of responsible position and standing ventured in some instances to suggest that his treatment of his plot was too bold—in other words, unconventional; while those of lesser repute offered to bring them out if he would pay half or all the expenses. But Armstrong was too wary to be taken in in

this way. No publisher will go out of his way to push or advertise a work if he shares no monetary risk in the production. If the book sells on its own merits, well and good; if not, he will not take the trouble to make it sell. He always has works by him by people with names, and of course he must push and advertise them, or he would not see his money back, and it is almost appalling to think what characterless works will catch the public by judicious advertising and puffing. So Harold Armstrong plodded slowly along, making a precarious living by writing short stories and articles, and often receiving almost starvation prices for the same. And a great injustice he felt most acutely was the custom editors had of printing his stories anonymously; they would not, and will not, go against a brutal rule that holds in some quarters, of issuing their periodicals with all the matter unsigned. And, personally, I consider this a gross wrong to the writer; for surely, if his work is worth accepting, it is worth acknowledging in a public form. All authors should be allowed the option of signing their efforts, either with their own name or a *nom de plume*. In the daily press this is scarcely needed, as articles for the most part are of a topical and ephemeral nature; but with weekly and monthly journals, and magazines, it is an entirely different matter, especially when a writer may have spent weeks and months in rearing and perfecting his literary bantling, which must go out to the world as an unknown offspring.

The cruelty of this arrangement affected Harold Armstrong very considerably, for while he was working like a slave, and turning out original fiction, he was making no name, and very little money. Had his works gone forth with himself as the acknowledged father, publishers and readers would soon have become familiar with his name, and he would have obtained the footing he was so earnestly striving for. Armstrong was a sympathetic and sensitive man, and his wrongs, or fancied wrongs, grated fearfully upon his



nerves. He was engaged to be married to a golden-haired, soft-eyed beauty; and, as the years went by and his position became no better, he began to despair of ever being able to furnish a home and provide an income for the girl he was so passionately devoted to. Moreover, he had noticed of late a coldness in her demeanour towards him, that was as maddening as it was unaccountable. Was she getting tired of waiting, or was the ardent affection that she had professed for him beginning to wane? He was so fond of her that he dared not inquire. He feared what might happen, and then he knew that life would be a blank for him. He had not a relation in the world, and she was the only being he had ever cared for, and his nature was so powerfully loyal that his love was stronger than the love of most people. It is always the way with sensitive and highly strung people—their affections are always more tender and sincere and heart-whole than those who are calm and placid, and never disturbed.

He did approach the subject that was disturbing his peace and happiness once, and she assured him he was mistaken, and they became more attached and devoted than ever. It was about six months after this incident that a publisher wrote him, proposing to bring out one of his works. And after the usual preliminary arrangements the manuscript was placed in the printer's hands, and the work proceeded. The joy with which he conveyed the glad tidings to his lady-love may be imagined, and yet somehow she did not evince the pleasure and satisfaction that he was naturally led to expect. Indeed, a pained look passed over her face, and she seemed altogether upset and startled by the news. He put it down to the suddenness of the disclosure, and saw no cause for discomfiture. Would they not be able to marry now—if the book were a success, and he had no fear of that—and would they not be happy ever after, just like the prince and princess in the fairy tale? And was not the book called

"Beauty Barbara," in compliment to herself—her own name being Barbara Brandon? Of course, and so they spent many days together quite contentedly, and looked forward to the appearance of "Beauty Barbara" with feverish anxiety—Harold with feelings of pride, Barbara with feelings that she could not describe.

At last "Beauty Barbara" was published and well received. The critics were charmed with the newness of style of the young author, and gave their praise without stint. The absence of namby-pambyism and ultra-sensationalism were commented upon with extreme favour, and Harold Armstrong saw the gates of fame roll back for him to enter. Only perseverance and application were necessary for him now to make direct headway, and maintain the celebrity his first book had brought him. Owing to the work and worry in connection with this event in his career, he had not seen Barbara for nearly a fortnight; but now that he was at liberty, he at once went to her home in Brompton. Arrived there, he was astonished to see the blinds of the house down, and it was with palpitating heart that he knocked at the door. An old housekeeper opened it, and when he stated his name and desire to see Miss Brandon, she said:

"Oh yes, sir, she has gone away and left this letter for you."

Eagerly he took the note and read: "*Forgive. Forget. I am not worthy of you. I was married on Thursday. Barbara.*" Married! On Thursday, and to-day was Saturday! He spoke not a word, but turned from the house bewildered and heart-broken. He went back to his solitary lodgings, and sat down speechless in his chair. When the landlady brought in his tea, he spoke not nor heeded her, but still sat gazing into vacancy. Far into the night he rose mechanically and took up the morning paper and turned to the marriages. Presently he came upon what he sought

Barbara was Barbara Brandon no longer. She was married, as she said. Yes, she had jilted him, tricked him, and played him false. Money was everything to her, and so she married for money, and broke her lover's heart. He put the paper from him, and sat down and tried to think, but the only thought that came and formed itself into unuttered speech was, "Barbara is Barbara no more, and the light of day is obscured for evermore by the midnight of Despair." That night he did not go to bed, but remained in the arm-chair by the fire—hopeless, helpless, and prostrated.

The landlady came and went; but he paid no attention to her voice—to her pleading request to speak, to say what was the matter, to eat, to drink, to do anything but sit so still and silent. He may have heard her, and he may not; but he made no reply.

She lit the lamp and put more coals on the fire; and then, as she cleared the things away, her eye fell upon Barbara's letter, which he had placed on the table, and she knew what it all meant. She had heard him speak of Miss Brandon—and this was the end.

"Poor fellow! Poor fellow!"

And the good soul wept silent tears of womanly pity, and stole from the room and left him alone in his grief.

Towards morning he rose and put Barbara's note in his pocket, and then he went to his bedroom and looked in the glass.

He started back in amazement. His hair and moustache were as white as snow, his face was deeply lined, and he was changed in one night from a young man into an old, haggard, careworn one.

He sat down on the edge of the bed to rest awhile, as though trying to collect his thoughts. At the end of a quarter of an hour he went to the cupboard where he kept all his manuscripts. Packet after packet he drew forth and gazed upon them; then he carried them in his arms, and

placed them one by one on the fire, waiting and watching until each one was burnt to ashes. When they were all destroyed, he got up and crossed to the window, and saw the sun rising in the early Sabbath sky.

He made no moan, and uttered no sigh. He put on his coat and hat and stealthily made his way from the room, from the house, out into the silent street, and on and on until the town was left far behind, and the green lanes and green fields were before him. The world had long since risen, and now from belfry and tower the bells were ringing out their invitation to the house of prayer—calling to the heavy and weary hearted to come and take comfort and rest. He marked not the summons, but still continued ever onward, until the sun had crossed the sky and sunk into the bowl of the west, and then he was seen no more.

Wherever he journeyed, wherever he went, was never known, and from that day to this the author of "Beauty Barbara" was never heard of again. He went from the light of day with his broken heart into the darkness of despair and misery, and no man knows whither, and no man knows his end.

## VIII.

### *WHAT A MAN CAN DO.*

AT one time, as a pantomime and burlesque actor Alec McMurphy had no equal, and as a low comedian generally he stood in the first rank. But he did not achieve his unique position without going through the mill, and in the early days Alec knew what it was to suffer and struggle on twenty-five shillings a week, that were far, far from being certain. However, he was full of life and hope, and at last came his one big chance, when a country manager was disappointed, just one week before opening with his pantomime, by the unexpected demise of his leading comedian. McMurphy was only engaged to play a subordinate part, but he boldly offered to fill the vacancy, and being at his wits' ends—all the best people being, of course, engaged—the manager gave the part to the confident McMurphy, though not without misgivings. On the opening night Alec McMurphy surprised even his most ardent admirers, and came through the ordeal with flying colours. His success was immediate and complete, and he bore off all the honours of the pantomime. Thenceforward McMurphy's career was brilliant and easy, and in due course he made his bow before a London audience, which speedily ratified the frank verdict of the country. And then came his downfall. Like so many people who could be named, success and adulation turned his brain, and he suffered from what the Americans aptly term "swollen head." He became so overbearing and obnoxious that out of business actors and actresses would have nothing to do with him, and instead of his position and attendant large salary

making him happy and contented, it made him wretched and despondent, for he found himself in the unenviable plight of being the most popular actor with the public and the most hated in the profession. By his own supercilious behaviour he became utterly isolated, where he might have been the most courted and jolly. All this affected McMurphy's pride, and instead of attributing the attitude of his brother actors to his own arrogance and stupidity, he put it down to their jealousy, and he felt himself an aggrieved and injured man, and then—the old story. He took to drink. Perhaps in the whole history of the stage no man rose so rapidly, and fell so rapidly, as did Alec McMurphy, for in two years he descended from the top of the tree to the bottom. Not a manager in town or country would engage him, because he could not be relied upon—he was never in a fit condition to appear when the time came, and so very soon every door was closed to him, and he sank gradually lower and lower.

For four years he did no work of any kind, but loitered away his time in low public-houses in the Strand and adjacent turnings. Drink was all he thought of, and he has been known to get drunk and sober, and drunk and sober, as many as three times in one day, for he was a man of powerful physique, and soon shook off the effects of his libations. Where he obtained his money was an unsolvable enigma. Where do bar-loafers obtain the money that they always seem to possess to buy their tipples with?—those who are in a public-house daily from the opening till the closing? Sometimes McMurphy would be seen carrying portmanteaux and bags to the railway stations, or holding horses, or doing anything of this kind for the sake of the small change that would be thrown to him, for he lost his self-respect and pride, and would accept and do anything that he might not go without his beer.

But it must not be thought that he had lost all sense of shame, or could forget the degradation of his condition. On

the contrary, he made many resolutions; but his resolutions were, unfortunately, of the same description with which the road to Hell is supposed to be paved. Many a time he vowed he would swear off; but, like Rip Van Winkle, he always wanted one more for the last time, and the last time never came.

One particularly drizzly, greasy day in the Strand, Alec McMurphy was staggering and scrambling along, and, on turning up Catherine Street, he came to a sudden stop. He turned out his pockets—not a halfpenny, nothing.

“Humph,” he mumbled, “stone-broke, and I used to have forty pounds a week. Alec, what a damned fool you have been—what a damned fool you are!”

So muttering, he lurched a bit farther.

“I’ll do it, by Heaven I will! No more drink after this day—only let me have one chance and I’ll reform.”

He had only just finished saying this when another man, also rather overweighted, knocked up against him, and sent him sprawling. With a curse on the stranger for his awkwardness, Alec was just getting up, when his hand closed upon something round and smooth on the pavement. He was on his feet in a minute and gazing upon his treasure beneath a lamp-post.

IT WAS A SOVEREIGN.

Then came the most fearful struggle of all. He remembered the words he had just uttered about turning over a new leaf if the chance came, and here was the chance. A sovereign! For that amount, at an old clothes-shop, he could make himself almost presentable, and he might get something to do. A sovereign! Who had lost it? Was it a gift direct from Providence? Not very likely, but it was an accident that might prove providential. But, heavens! how thirsty he was! Should he have one more glass, really for the last time, and so change the money?

He walked slowly up the street—he was sober now. Surely

one drink would not do him any harm. Only one, you know, and then——. The inward voices kept prompting him first one way, then the other; and at last, in sheer agony, he bawled out, as though addressing some aggressive individual :

“Go to the devil ! I won’t drink another drop so long as I live.”

Having settled that point after a very severe contest with his cravings and his conscience, another difficulty arose. How was he to change the sovereign ? Shabby as he was, people might want to know where he got it from, and perhaps ask questions which would be awkward to answer. What was he to do ? He was so outrageously ragged and dilapidated, you know. If he went to a second-hand clothes-dealer’s and offered it in payment for a coat, they might think he had stolen it, and very likely give him in charge ! What a cruel predicament he was in—wealth in his possession, and he could not use it ! By this time, without noticing which way he was going, he had reached the top of Endell Street, and, still pursuing his way, he got into Gower Street, when a voice in the rear called out :

“Here, my man ! Do you want to earn a shilling ? ”

Alec McMurphy turned round, and mechanically took the portmanteau that the young fellow handed him. He was not altogether in the mood for this sort of thing now, but he trudged along deep in thought, thinking that an opportunity for changing his sovereign might occur.

The young traveller was an actor ; Alec could see that at a glance. Oh, if he could only open his heart to this stranger, and beg his assistance ! Should he ? No, because his tale was too long, and, moreover, he would have to say who he was, and he did not wish to do that—he had got too bad a reputation ; besides, he had already made up his mind to discard the name of McMurphy—it was only an adopted one and he would henceforward use his own—Murray.



"You seem depressed, my man," said the stranger.

"Yes, I am. Depressed almost to despair!"

"Hallo," thought the young actor, "this is not an ordinary vagabond. What's brought him to this pass, I wonder?"

And then he continued aloud:

"Down on your luck, eh?"

Just at this moment they passed a lamp, and the light fell full upon Alec's clean-shaven face.

"Phew! Are you an actor?"

"I was," said Alec slowly; and then gaining fresh courage, from the other's kindly face and manner, he went on: "I was an actor, but I ruined myself by my folly and carelessness."

"Well; but it's never too late to mend. Can't you pull up?"

"Yes; I'm going to try to-night."

Much more was said on both sides, and eventually Alec told his story without giving his old stage name. He also mentioned the trouble he was in about the sovereign.

"I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Murray. If I can be of assistance to you, I will. You say you used to play leading comedy; well, I have not been long in the profession myself, but if you like to come down with me for the fortnight's engagement I am going to, I'll rig you out and you shall have a pound a week until we see what can be done."

Alec's gratitude was almost grotesque in its fervour. He accepted at once, and they adjourned to a second-hand clothes-shop off the Euston Road, and Alec reappeared looking and feeling smarter than he had done for many a long day.

The young actor was as good as his word, and Alec was as good as his. It was no easy task that he set himself, and he had many battles to fight, and many temptations to master; but he succeeded, and gradually worked his way up in the

profession, until, in a few years, he once more came to town and made bigger successes than ever. And seeing the change that had taken place, his brother professionals forgot and forgave him, and he long reigned as an idol on the boards and off, and died at a good ripe age, respected by every one. Perhaps you knew him?

## IX.

### THE DANCER'S STRATEGY.

QUITE the pet of all the London beaux and dandies was pretty Mabel Percy, the graceful dancer at the Jollity Theatre. She was a sweet, unaffected little thing, full of the daintiest graces, and her dancing was *par excellence*, and more entrancing than that of any actress who had ever appeared in burlesque before. She was a good girl too, and not a breath of rumour ever assailed the correctness of her character. She lived at home with her aunt, and was most regular in her habits, and lived far below her income. In fact, like a sensible girl, she was putting by for a rainy day, should that undesirable period arrive. She had admirers, of course, by the score; and almost every impressionable youth who had seen her felt himself madly in love with Mabel Percy. She had no desire to get married, she declared, and refused many offers; but do what she would, she could not prevent the mashers worshipping her, nor could she prevent them from writing and declaring their passion. They hung about the stage-door and went to immense trouble to obtain an introduction; and though Mabel was always nice and kind, she would give them no encouragement. She was quite content with her profession, and did not want to marry out of it—or in it, for that matter.

Charlie Montague, the conductor of the orchestra at the Jollity, was her staunch friend, and to him she always went when she wanted advice, and it was always to him that she gave her first smile each night as she bounded on in the burlesque. Charlie Montague had known her father and

mother, and when she got her engagement at the Jollity—some said it was largely through his influence and intercession—he gave her music and singing lessons, and so renewed a regular acquaintance with the pretty Mabel whom he had only seen once or twice since she wore short frocks off the stage, and now she only wore short frocks on the stage. Yes, the two were very good friends indeed, and Mabel considered him a marvel of ability and acumen.

When the Jollity management offered to renew her engagement for three years at an increasing salary each year, she at once took the agreement to Charlie Montague, and asked his opinion. Somehow, when Charlie read the salary proposed, he gave a sigh, though nobody could understand why he should do so, because the terms were very good indeed.

“Shall I accept, Charlie?” she inquired.

They always called each other by their Christian names, for they were more like brother and sister, you know, as the people at the theatre always remarked. Why, when Mabel was quite a little thing, and Charlie was a boy, he had nursed, or, at least, held, her in his lap, and had even given her pick-a-backs when she was tired. Charlie was ten years older than Mabel, and Mabel now was only just twenty.

“Shall I accept, Charlie?” she repeated.

“Decidedly,” he replied; “the money is good, and it will add to your reputation to be at the Jollity so long,” he answered.

“And won't you be glad to have me at the same theatre as well?” she archly inquired.

“Glad! I should think so, Mabel.”

“And we shall be able to go on with the lessons as well, you know.”

“So we shall. Yes, we'll continue the lessons,” he said, somewhat absently.

So it was settled Mabel was to stay three years longer at the Jollity.

For about a twelvemonth, things at the theatre went on much the same as usual. Mashers came and went, and worshipped and sighed in vain, and afforded plenty of fun for Mabel, who related each conquest to Charlie with great glee. Charlie could not quite make her out. Was she really heartless or only indifferent to the proposals of these sentimental noodles, or was she very hard to please? Perhaps Mr. Right had not come along yet?

One day while Charlie was giving Mabel a music lesson, almost superfluous now, though Mabel insisted upon taking them, she stopped in the middle of a new song, and exclaimed, "Oh, Charlie! I'm in such trouble. Don't let us have any more music. I want your advice."

"Say on; I'm your sphinx. What is the trouble now—more lovers?"

"Yes—more lovers. Isn't it a nuisance? I wonder why the men will be so foolish——"

"Who is it this time?"

"Well, it's—don't laugh—it's three!"

"Three! What, all at once?"

"Yes," said she mournfully,—“two noble lords and an honourable,—and they have all proposed!”

"Phew! And what can I do? Get rid of them?" he asked gaily.

"Yes, I suppose you must. At least, two of them—I can't have three husbands, you know."

Charlie ceased bantering at once. He felt uncomfortable. At last she had made up her mind, then, and was going to marry!

"Tell me—which am I to send off?"

"I don't know," she said plaintively.

"You don't know! What, haven't you made up your mind as to which you'll accept?"

"No; I don't know my mind. You must assist me. There's Lord de Brompton, who lisps; and Lord Crutchley, who hasn't got any particular talent; and the Honourable Fred Fritter, who always weeps and wants to blow his brains out."

"Has he got any?"

"I don't think he has got many—but you must not be hard on the Honourable Fred; he can't help it, poor thing," she exclaimed seriously.

"I don't see how I can assist you, Mabel. In such a matter as matrimony the girl should make her own choice. To be honest, though I am not prejudiced in the favour of either, I might make a mistake. Can't you make up your mind? I should dismiss the Honourable Fred. He's no good. And both the noble lords are harmless. Which shall it be?"

Charlie Montague was quite in earnest. If Mabel wanted to marry one of these lords, why shouldn't she, if she really wished it?

"I cannot decide. Can't we raffle them?"

"Raffle them! Good heavens, Mabel—raffle for a husband?"

"Yes; you see, I have promised to give them their answer to-day. I expect they'll drive up in cabs shortly. I arranged it all quite nicely, so I must get the affair settled properly. I saw them all three together in the green-room last night, and told them if they called separately—at intervals—I would instruct the servant to admit the one I decided to take, and the others would be informed that I was out."

Charlie Montague was dismayed. Was Mabel Percy, after all, nothing but a designing, cold-hearted flirt, who was willing to sell herself for a mere title? Oh, it made him mad. However, he would carry it through, for the sake of her father.

"Mabel, you surprise me. Do you not know that love and marriage are the most serious events in our lives? Can you calmly leave the choice of a husband to mere caprice?"

She was very quiet, and said quite innocently, "Marriage is a lottery, you know, so I thought it would be right to have a raffle—write their names on a piece of paper, put them in a hat, and then you draw for me. And, of course, the first that you take out, and you say it is right to accept him, I will."

"I won't draw, Mabel. I won't have anything to do with such an arrangement. I think you are a heartless, unfeeling girl. You——" Then he stopped, and I believe there was a tear in his eye as he turned away.

Mabel burst into tears, and sobbed:

"You have always promised to be my friend; and now when my fate, my happiness, are at stake, you only say rude words to me."

He tried to comfort her, and spoke soothingly, wondering all the time how it was that women were such capricious and incomprehensible beings.

"I place my fate and happiness in your hands, and you won't decide the wisest course for me."

He could not keep back the tears now. He would do as she wished.

"Why, Charlie, you are crying. What have I said? Why do you cry?"

"Because, Mabel, I love you myself. You've placed your fate and happiness in my hands to give away; and when I give you away, I give my own happiness too." And he moved from her.

She slipped off the couch, and stole after him, placing her hand in his.

"Dear Charlie! How was I to know that you loved me?"

At this moment a cab drove up, and the servant appeared.

"Lord de Brompton, Miss."

"Not at home, say."

And the cab drove away again.

Charlie looked at her; he could scarcely understand her meaning yet, and she was holding down her head so demurely.

Another cab drove up.

"The Honourable Mr. Fritter, Miss."

"Not at home, Mary."

And so that cab drove off.

"Mabel, dear Mabel, do you really mean ——"

A third cab drove up.

"Lord Crutchley, Miss."

And then there was a pause.

"What shall I say, Charlie?" And she looked joyously into his face.

"May I answer for you now, and for ever?" he whispered.

"Yes."

"Not at home, Mary."

"Yes, Sir."

And the last cab drove away, and Mary came to the door.

"Please, Miss——"

"Well, what is it?"

"Will there be any more of them gentlemen call?"

"Why?"

"'Cause, Miss, their langwidge is suthin' awful, and it gives me the creeps."

"What do they say, Mary?" said Charlie.

"Oh, Sir, please—Damn, Sir. Three damns each right off—nine of 'em, Sir."

"There will not be many more d——, callers I mean."

And Mary departed.

"But supposing I had not understood, after all! Suppos-



ing I had been afraid to speak in face of these noble lords !  
What then, Mabel, dear ? ”

“ Why, then I should have proposed to you myself.”

And then ensued one of those foolish love scenes that young people will indulge in occasionally, and so we will leave them billing and cooing.

## X.

### *LOVE ME FOR EVER.*

#### I.

WHEN Jarvis Harringford set out for the city whose streets are supposed to be paved with gold, it was with one defined and well-wrought-out determination. Dramatic literature was in a bad way, and the drama, according to all accounts, had taken refuge at the Dogs' Home at Battersea—at least, as that was the only place he knew dogs went to, and as the drama had gone to the dogs, why, of course, Battersea was their Hades and Paradise combined. Therefore he resolved to try and revive the drama at all costs, and came to town with many plays and plans ready to lay at the feet of managers who would naturally be as anxious as himself to get the drama on its legs again. As a youth, the stage had greatly fascinated Jarvis Harringford; and at a certain turning-point in his life, when owing to deaths and adversity in his family he found himself cast adrift by this peculiar turning of the tide, he entered the ranks of the profession as an actor. And by dint of activity, and writing for various papers, sketches of a light and frolicsome kind, he managed to eke out a living. Moreover, he was ambitious and studious, and there was a fire smouldering in his breast that only wanted a little fanning to convert into one glorious and undying flame.

The dramatic instinct was in him as strong as the desire to live—and they both wanted feeding. The dramatic instinct, however, that he felt was not one he exhibited in his acting—he knew that. He felt that he had no ability to put

into living semblance and form the creations of other people's brains. He knew how it should be done, but he could not do it. Not for an instant, when the truth flashed upon him, did he disguise the fact or deceive himself as to his acting talent. He had not got any. He went through his parts all right, and never made an exhibition of himself—but he could not act. He had made a mistake. He was not cut to the right pattern to make an actor, except a very mediocre one—and mediocrity he despised. If he could not be in the front rank, he would not be in any. Such being his convictions, he was not long in deciding upon deserting the sock and buskin for the instrument that is mightier than the sword—unless you are at close quarters with a man who is anxious to skewer you, then the sword comes in handy and the pen takes a back rack. Consequently, when a certain engagement came to an end more abruptly than usual, he distributed his theatrical “props.” amongst his fellow-actors, and shook hands, so to speak, with Thalia and Melpomene, and assured those young women that he was not going to desert them—he was only about to change his tactics, and devote his pen and brain to them, instead of impeding their progress by his acting. Apparently they bade him be of good cheer, for he started off to walk to London with a light heart and a still lighter purse. But what is the waywardness of the frivolous jade Fortune to one who has a dozen springs in his breast from which hope keeps continually bubbling? Nothing. The world was his oyster—he liked oysters, and had never seen the one yet that he could not open—and so with his goosequill, or, properly speaking,

Hindoo, No. 2, he was going to prise it open very much indeed.

He did not possess the customary half a crown when he reached the Whittington stone at Highgate; but that did not trouble him; he possessed what was better, pluck and good spirits. Just for luck, not knowing exactly whether there

was a rivulet from Parnassus anywhere near the archway, he went into the tavern hard by and had a tankard of beer as the nearest approach to the nectar of the gods, and he vowed it far better than any draught from the harmonious stream of Helicon, because that stream was sometimes muddy.

Not being quite prepared to interview managers yet, he spent his first evening in town by going carefully to every theatre, where he still more carefully perused the day bills to see what was going on. Then the next day he set up as author. He had already secured an introduction to a newspaper editor, and for the time being he consented to act in whatever capacity it might please his chief to assign him. Thus he was not likely to starve. Early and late he plied at his new profession, and every spare moment he had he devoted to the writing and re-writing of his plays. These in due time he sent round to the various managers, who, with surprising courtesy and promptitude, sent them back to him again. It was astonishing how far ahead their arrangements were made. According to their own account, they all had dozens of extraordinary new plays ready to produce when they should want them, and therefore they had no opening at present for Mr. Jarvis Harringford's "deeply interesting and original drama." The more Jarvis saw of the plays that were running, and the more he tried to fathom the marvels of the managerial mind, the more was he puzzled. He was forcibly reminded of the anecdote told of the editor of a certain well-known comic paper. The editor was out at a party one evening, and one of the guests said casually to the great man :

"By the way, I suppose now and then you do get some good jokes sent in by outside people?"

"Oh yes," was the cheery reply.

"Then I wish to heaven you would use some of them occasionally!"

This is precisely what Jarvis Harringford thought, and what many another has thought, and perhaps the same thought is working around still. For five years did he try to get a hearing without success, and all the time a cry went up from the critics asking for new plays, and still the only new plays were the old ones, or adaptations from the French. Hope is not easily crushed in the young aspirant's breast, particularly if he knows his works are good; but Jarvis began to grow nervous and frightened. Did managers never produce plays by unknown authors? Was there any truth in the statement dinned into his ears by actor and *littérateur* alike?

"There is only one way," said an experienced actor; "try your piece at a *matinée*. Business in the theatrical world is not conducted on business principles, the same as in commerce or other professions; it is all left to chance. Produce your play, and if it is any good you'll get plenty of offers."

"A hundred pounds for a *matinée*! Why, I haven't got twenty! But I can work, and I will. I'll try the *matinée*."

With Jarvis to make up his mind was to do. He saved the hundred pounds, and his play was produced. It was a failure—not a dead failure; but there were so many disappointments, and things went wrong generally. The leading actor was taken ill at the last moment, which necessitated changing the characters, and somehow the square pegs got into the round holes. The management was bad, and the acting of one particular man was worse, and he did his best to kill the piece. It is true that a country manager gave him ten pounds for the rights, and that it made a hit in the provinces; but for London it was ruined, and the managers seemed to fight more shy of his manuscripts than ever.

Troubles never do come singly. Jarvis had a trio. The first was his play. The second was only a minor matter. To one of the actresses in the cast poor Jarvis had been

paying his attentions for some time, and she had reciprocated; and even on the very morning of the performance, when he had gone to her in her dressing-room, she had said, "Don't forget me—love me for ever." "Love me for ever" had been one of their sentimental phrases; and yet, with the words warm upon her lips, so soon as the play was over, she had gone from him, and he saw her no more. The third trouble was caused through the change of proprietorship in the paper on which he had been engaged so long, and so he was thrown out of an engagement.

Another five years passed away, and still Jarvis Harrington haunted the stage-doors with his plays. He had fallen upon evil times, and he was no longer smartly dressed. He had no regular employment now, and lived by doing such literary work as he could get. Perhaps he had grown careless and indifferent—his troubles had been many, and we are not all of us able to bear up against misfortune. Like many before him, fate seemed against him. He had nothing to recommend him but his ability; and as that had never been given a fair trial, nobody believed it was there. And then the once bright and hopeful young author sank lower into the dregs of poverty—his health was giving way, and very soon he disappeared, and no one knew what became of him.

## II.

A new actress had come to London from America, and brought an American play with her. The play had failed, as is the general rule with American plays; but the actress had made a deep impression, and now the manager of the Olla Podrida Theatre was hunting around for a new piece in which to exploit this beautiful star, Miss Ethel Vancourt. But this was not an easy matter, for Miss Vancourt was hard to please. When she had read half a dozen plays that had been submitted to her, she declared that none of them would

do. Had not he got any more? No, not one. Stay, there was a pile of manuscripts in his *sanctum*—sent in by unknown people, you know. They *might* by accident come across a suitable piece, you know. The actress seized upon the idea at once, and read all that seemed likely to suit. She had taken upon herself more than she had bargained for. However, she was not one to give in, and she continued to read. In the course of her reading she came upon a poor dilapidated manuscript, fearfully thumbled and ragged, and without any cover. The title, however, was there, and the cast. She read this attentively twice, and then she went in triumph to the manager.

"There's the piece I shall play in. Find the author, and put it in rehearsal at once."

To say "find the author" was simple enough; but when you don't happen to know the name of the author you want to find the matter assumes an importance that is slightly irritating. They advertised for the author, and they made inquiries; but nobody replied, and the rehearsals had to go on without him.

"He is sure to turn up in time," was the verdict; and as it could not be improved upon, it was accepted.

The first night of *Love Me For Ever* is remembered to this day. It was such a remarkable success, and the fact that the author was unknown and could not be found lent an air of romance to the performance that vastly pleased the public. At the end of the play, when everybody was dressed and ready to depart, a young actor made his way to the stage-door and asked to see the manager. "Manager too busy to see anybody." This nonplussed the young actor considerably, and he was saying in a pet to the hall-keeper:

"I know the author of the piece," when Miss Vancourt appeared, and she overheard him.

"You do? What is his name? Where can he be found?"

"Well, his name is Jarvis Harringford."

"Jarvis Harringford!" she repeated in surprise. "Jarvis Harringford! How do you know?"

"He gave me the play to read some years ago, and directly I saw it acted to-night I remembered it at once," was the answer.

"Where—where is he?" she inquired quite eagerly.

"Dead, for aught I know," was the dull reply.

"Dead? What do you mean? Where is he?" She spoke rapidly and anxiously, and the young fellow was sorry he had been so brusque.

"He used to live in Soho, in a common lodging-house. I know he was ill for a very long time; and as I have not seen him about for ages, I concluded that he was dead."

"Can you find this lodging-house?"

"Oh, yes. I can give you the address;" and he wrote it down on the back of a card. He also, at her request, called a cab, into which she got, and drove to the address he had given her.

It was in a grimy room in a grimy, evil-smelling house that Ethel Vancourt found the author of the night's success, tossing and tumbling on a bed of sickness.

The old woman who kept the house stood at the door holding the light, while Ethel went forward and took hold of the sick man's hand. He looked into her face, but made no sign.

"Jarvis," she said softly, "don't you remember me? Jarvis! Jarvis! Look at me—Love me for ever!" and she leant over and kissed his cold forehead.

"Ethel—Ethel—Love me for ever? Why, what does it mean? Am I dreaming still?"

"No, no! It is I, Jarvis, come back to you—come to you with good news."

While she talked to him gently, and learnt all that he had suffered, she sent the old woman for beef-extract and wine.



Then she told him of the success of his play, and how it had all happened.

He listened quietly, as if still in a trance, but he understood, though it seemed all too delicious; and to have her back, too, whom he thought had deserted him for ever!

"But, Ethel, why did you go away when my first play failed—when I needed your love and tenderness so much? I thought—oh, I don't know what I thought;" and he kissed her hand again and again in the fulness of his joy at her return.

"You must forgive that. I acted for the best. I had no time to let you know. When I was a girl of seventeen, my brother caused me to be married to a friend of his—a Jew money-lender—a creature I loathed. He had my brother in his power, and, as I afterwards learnt, I was the price paid for his freedom. I was forced into a marriage with this man——"

"Married! Oh, Ethel!" moaned Jarvis.

"Stay. I was married, and we parted at the church-door. I ran away the same day, changed my name, and went on the stage. When I was acting in your piece so long ago, I saw this man sitting in the stalls, and I saw that he recognised me. To escape was all my thought, so directly the performance was over I dressed hurriedly and left the theatre by the front of the house, for I had seen him from the landing waiting by the stage-door. I got away, and went to Liverpool, and the next day I was on my way to New York."

"But why did you not write me, dear?" he asked.

"Because, as I was married by law, I knew it would be only cruel for me to let you go on hoping for what I feared could never be, and I thought it better that you should forget me—that we should both forget."

"As if I could! And now——"

"And now—well, you can do as you please, for that odious

creature, as I learnt from a newspaper in New York, has been dead some months, and I am free," she exclaimed in a sadly sweet tone, that thrilled poor Jarvis, kindling hope again.

"Ethel, if you don't mind waiting for a poor wrecked play-wright to recover, I will ask you to share the profits of *Love Me For Ever*. Will you be my wife, dear—that is, if you think I am not too bad for you?"

She kissed him for answer, and left him for the night. The next day she had him removed and properly cared for, with herself as chief physician and nurse.

When he was quite convalescent, and able to get about again, he said to her one afternoon:

"Ethel dear, when shall we be married?"

"When you please," she answered shyly.

"Dear, dear Ethel, how can I repay you—how can I show my gratitude and affection?"

"Love me for ever," she answered. "Love me for ever."

## XI.

### *THE MODERN NED PURDON.*

THE Ned Purdon of to-day is in no better condition than was the original patcher-up of pamphlets and books. He is just as poverty-stricken, just as hungry, and just as improvident as ever, and his epitaph may well stand exactly as Noll Goldsmith wrote it over a hundred years ago :—

“ Here lies poor Ned Purdon, from misery freed,  
Who long was a bookseller's hack :  
He led such a damnable life in this world,  
I don't think he'll wish to come back.”

There is no thoroughfare in London now that bears the name of Grub Street, but in Bohemia it still exists for the poor devils who struggle on from day to day picking up a living in the bye-ways of literature as well as they are able. Occasionally they roll in clover for a day or so, but as a rule their existence is more precarious than that of the beggars of Prague. Yet they move in select society, for they dine with Duke Humphrey and sup with Sir Thomas Gresham.

Sometimes they are found hanging on to the skirts of a few uncertain editors of still more uncertain journals, and earn a trifle now and then by writing a leaderette, or a puffing paragraph, or the report of a fire or thrilling murder that may—or may not—have taken place. For they are none too squeamish on the point of honour, and all is fish that comes to the net of their imagination, especially when fired by an exasperatingly empty purse. The curious part about these failures—for literary hacks are the failures

in literature—is that, almost without exception, they have started life under favourable auspices. Many have had patrimonies, and wasted them; and many have been the levellers of their own fortunes and prospects—few, indeed, of them owe their position to the scourging of outrageous fortune. College men for the most part, they have come to town with degrees, M.A.'s and B.A.'s, in flocks, and with a pure love for the calling they have attempted to make their own. They have nearly all commenced well, and in the early days have shown such promise of their capabilities, and what they could achieve as they liked, that their failures have appeared almost inscrutable. There are several that I wot me of who are at continual warfare, not only with adversity, but with actual starvation. There is no hope for them; they will fight with a pluck that is, for the time being, indomitable; and then, as they find themselves going back still further, they will gradually sink, and slink away into some corner, to be heard of no more. Of course there are many who have no more real talent for journalism or authorship than the ordinary penny-a-liner, and equally, of course, they fail before they begin. They are no good for anything.

Some literary hacks are premature failures who have by no means fulfilled the expectations of those who believed in them, or have realised their own anticipations. Sometimes success has ruined a brilliant young writer through his own bumptious stupidity; for, alas! there are many who have evolved one brilliant piece of workmanship and then stopped. Not always because the fount of inspiration has run dry, but because they have become indifferent and given way to that curse of literary and all advancement—procrastination. It is surprising what a number of one-book writers there are who, having made a spurt and achieved a *succès d'estime*, have conceived the world to be at their feet, and some few have had it there, and then by their laziness or inability to persevere

have allowed it to roll away from them for ever. Men of astonishingly powerful brain have missed the tide, and instead of going up stream have floated down with the flotsam and jetsam—men whose attainments, directed into the right channel, would have landed them high and dry at the gates of fame and fortune. Some have made a few half-hearted spurts and then have given up in despair, because, forsooth, they have not had the courage, the resolution to laugh at disappointments and still steer on. Genius has been aptly defined as the capacity for hard work. Talent may be defined as the outcome of a determination to go in and win. And when this is resolved upon, there are not many losers at the game, for be it remembered that in all professions it is to the man who steadily works that success comes sooner or later. Many may have heart-breaking and rest-disturbing disappointments and obstacles to overcome, and there are few men who know this from experience better than the present writer; but he firmly believes that everything comes to the man who works patiently and unceasingly.

Of course, hacks are not made in a day. They begin to go back almost imperceptibly, but when once started on the downward course, the slope is so steep that the drifting becomes like second nature—once given way to, and there is rarely any chance of climbing up again. There are degrees even amongst literary hacks—there is the shabby, shambling, down-at-heel hack, full of despair and self-abandonment, who thinks mankind is in league against him, and consequently makes no effort to retrieve—to make up for lost and wasted time—but goes backward a step every day, and spends what money he does earn in some press house, staying, perhaps, all day and all night, too, until his last twopence is spent, when he will come forth a wretched piece of humanity to cry out against the Fates, and the bad luck that has brought him to such a pass, never once owning that

he himself has been his own destroyer. In all walks of life this class of person is to be found. It is the man and not the profession that is to blame. Then there is the hack who, through his own carelessness, or the adverse action of circumstances, finds himself at the bottom of the ladder. But having temporary fits of cheerfulness and energy, he continues to keep his head above water, and is ready and willing to write anything, from a scientific review to a quack doctor's advertisement. One day he will be studiously engaged at the British Museum, writing "original" matter from those beneficent tomes that the public often read about but never see. Or perchance he will be occupied in writing a sermon—a scholarly sermon too—for some lazy or incapable curate, or even vicar. Ah! the pious congregations at some of the outlying and small country churches little guess where the sermon that wakes them up or sends them to sleep has been manufactured! Very likely by a hack with about as much idea of morality as a depredating hen. I remember one young curate who in years gone by was regularly supplied with the sermons that he used to preach, or rather, read. He never even took the trouble to copy out the MS., but read it just as he received it; and one old lady in his congregation actually left him a legacy because he was such a good and sympathetic preacher! If she had only known his real character! He acknowledged himself that he had only embraced the Church because it was the wish of a wealthy maiden aunt, who made him her heir solely on account of his piety and earnestness. And half his days he was up in town, dressed in the civilian garb, indulging in as big a racket as the most dare-devil young scamp could dream of. It was always a wonder to those who knew him that he was never caught red-handed in some of his escapades. Perhaps it was his very daring that saved him. It is only fair to him to say that when his aunt died, and he came into her money, he doffed the black coat and followed the bent

of his own inclinations, which was for horse-racing and fast living.

Another order of literary hack is the one who is not over-gifted himself, but manages to keep tolerably straight and presentable. He will accept any kind of work, and never refuses a thing, no matter what it is or how soon it may be wanted. His hands may be full of work, yet he will go on accepting all that offers. Of course he cannot do one tithe of the work himself, so he hunts up all the lesser hacks he knows, and they become his "devils." They "devil" for him, and are glad to receive a third, and often less, of the sum he gets himself; and this middleman hack, as he may be termed, might easily make a decent living if he would only be less improvident, and if he would not be always keeping his spirits up by pouring spirits down. Not long ago, a bookseller-employed a hack to write a manual, and gave him over a hundred pounds for the work. The hack employed a "devil," and that poor devil received exactly ten pounds and two-and-sixpence, the half-crown having been drawn in advance from the hack, who pocketed the rest—in all probability a hundred and five pounds for a work of which he never penned a single line! And there are scores of university men, professors, and erudite scholars in London who are devilling away for dear life for pay that would make a labourer turn up his nose. Facts are exceptionally stubborn things and horribly unpleasant withal, and in the back streets of Bohemia there are many facts that would not only make the judicious grieve, but would cause a shock to all their susceptibilities. However, it is not my intention to pile on the agony, and so I will only relate one other secret of the charnel-house. It must be remembered that, if I give so many particulars of the failures, it is because the successes can sing their own praises by the deeds and positions they have secured.

Although ordinary publishers and proprietors and editors

of that second-hand style of paper, the pickers and stealers who crib and annex their scraps, small notices, and tit-bits from any source that opens—literary pirates, who, instead of paying writers for original matter, purloin and “lift” their copy, and force their circulation by bribing the public with premiums, insurances, and money prizes—although these publishers and booksellers no longer keep a hack chained up, as it were, on the premises, they always have their regular jobber and patch-worker, who makes his weekly calls, and is ever ready to do what is wanted—a biography, a homily on the virtues, the pleasures of a temperate life, or what not. Sometimes a publisher will receive a novel from an ambitious lady writer. In all probability the plot will be exciting and catching, but the grammar and phraseology will be so deplorably bad that, unless he had the hack by to lick it into shape, the work would never see the light of day. But it does. The hack, who could not invent an original plot himself, is quite able to put the book into decent English, and this he does for a few pounds, while the author reaps all the glory. Those behind the scenes will be able to call to mind a certain work that had quite a phenomenal success not very long ago—that was shaped and almost re-written by a literary hack, who received seven pounds for his trouble. These are some of the tricks of the trade, and the literary hack is an adjunct that has become almost indispensable, so let us not be too hard upon his weaknesses and failings, but thank our stars that we have kept to the high road, and left the slums behind.



## XII.

### *A BOHEMIAN FAMILY.*

REFINEMENT and education have done a vast deal towards elevating the tone of the Drama, but it is doubtful whether a certain class of individuals possessing artistic and excitable natures will ever be taught the uses and value of thrift. They seem to be born by a happy-go-lucky chance, and by a happy-go-lucky chance they seem to live. Music and morals, as we are constantly reminded, do not always go together—indeed, the divine heart of melody would appear to bestow upon some of its apostles and professors very earthy and vague ideas as to what morality really does mean. And as for ordinary prudence, there are persons—artistic, musical, and dramatic—who have not the slightest conception of it, and are as improvident all their lives as a miser is grasping. I do not say that they are abandoned spend-thrifts—I mean that they are incapable of appreciating the value of money for their own benefit and advantage. They are restless, excitable, energetic, indolent, and full of nervous force. Ingenious paradoxes, you will say. True, for they are born paradoxes, and live and die paradoxes. They live theatrical lives (in its widest meaning), and are theatrical in all they think and do, albeit they need not belong to the dramatic profession, or any profession, for that matter; for, in truth, there are many actors and actresses who never appear on the boards, but who act their farcical tragedies and tragical farces on the stage of the world's gigantic theatre. In the bygone days, shamle-gaited, shabby-genteel Micawbers infested every side-walk in Bohemia; and though

the class is becoming almost extinct since respectability has invaded the Land of Artistic Promise, now and then Bohemian families of the old prodigal, shiftless (no pun intended) order are to be met with. I know of one in particular.

Tom Best's mother, who was an actress, after giving birth to him, died the next day. So little Tom Best started in the world as a seven months' child, and was generously suckled by the chambermaid of the company, who had only recently lost her own baby. Tom Best's father was so upset by the sudden death of his wife that his mind became unhinged, so the kind-hearted little chambermaid became father and mother to the tiny mite. Tom was born to the stage, and after performing as an infant phenomenon in the pantomimes, and as a boy and a girl indiscriminately, when called upon, in the various dramas requiring a child, he was promoted to the permanent post of call-boy, and when too old to play children's parts he took to playing men's. After serving some years in the profession as an all-round actor, he accidentally discovered that he possessed a voice, and then he went and got married to the left-handed daughter of his foster-mother and a noble earl, who showed his nobility by deserting his mistress directly she got into "trouble." Whether Tom Best married purely because he had made the discovery that he could sing, or because he had already made up his mind to take the fatal step, I cannot say; but the fact remains that he did get married, and many pledges of affection were the result. Now, Tom was the merriest cricket in existence, and the heavier his troubles became the lighter grew his heart; and his wife, sincerely in love with her careless, clever, volatile husband, took the cue from him, and became merry and light-hearted too. They were an excellently matched pair, and if they were down one day they were up the next, though to keep the pot boiling was no easy matter. And she brought babies into the world with such alarming

regularity that genial wags, noticing Tom's woe-begone face when another stranger came to town, would jocularly observe that she had done her Best again. "Alas!" sighed Tom, "the worst thing she ever does is to do her Best."

A good-natured professor gave Tom singing and music lessons, and he soon made quite a stir with his wonderful voice, for he could be baritone, bass, and even tenor when required, and he was artistic and clever at all times. Had he been a provident man, and had he and his wife lived less in the present and with even the smallest wink of the eye for the future, they might have defied poverty. But the terrible disease of careless indifference was in them both; and so when prosperity smiled they lived like fighting cocks, and when adversity frowned they shifted as well as they could; so that in the course of time they were in a perpetual state of getting into debt and getting out of it again. For twenty-five years they existed in this haphazard, heedless way, until even in Bohemia Tom's incautious and prodigal ways became as a proverb. And on one occasion, when he and some choice spirits were trying to drive dull care away by composing epitaphs for each other's tombstones, one young wit turned the following epigram for Tom Best:—

"Here lies old Tom, a Bohemian bold,  
Whose life was a freak and a jest;  
His spirit has flown to regions unknown—  
But, great Scott! the Lord knew Best."

Tom's ups and downs during the twenty-five years as actor, vocalist, entertainer, manager, and author—for he occasionally wrote farces, songs, and operettas, and sometimes he would compose his own music as well—would fill a large volume. He had risen so high at one period of his career that he became lessee and manager of one of the largest West End theatres, and for awhile they all lived in clover. And then came the crash from which Tom never recovered. He

paid his debts honourably, but it cost him all he possessed, and they had to move from Kensington to apartments over a shop in Bloomsbury. Thenceforth his engagements, or "shops," as he termed them, were more varied than remunerative. His children were growing up into men and women, and at the time when I first met him, his eldest son William, called Maximilian for short, was twenty-four, Charley was twenty-two, Julia was twenty-one, Dick was nineteen, and Ada was sweet seventeen.

Dick, who was more musical than dramatic, had been christened Richard Kean Best, consequently everybody called him Macready, and for a long time I was under the impression that that was his proper name. Ada must have forgotten her real cognomen, for she was invariably called Cinderella, presumably because she hated housework like poison.

Nicknames were the order of the Best family. Julia, of course, was Judy, and, oddly enough, her sweetheart was called Punch, a sobriquet bestowed upon him long before he knew Judy Best. Charley was known to all his acquaintances as Boggles. Tom Best was designated Tommy and and Guv'nor indifferently by the boys, while the girls, who worshipped him, were more dutiful with "Pa, dear!" Mrs. Best was referred to by all as the Grand Duchess, chiefly on account of her having been asked to play that part by an agent, who was not aware that she could not sing anything more elegant than a comic song.

They were a most united family, and Bohemian to the backbone, for they inherited most of their parents' instincts and tastes. They were all clever, and gave promise of achieving, if not fame, at any rate, decent positions in the professions they adopted, and they have largely fulfilled their early promise. They were as loyal to their parents as any father and mother could wish, and their home was like unto a commonwealth where all shared equally. What cared they about

duns and threats of county-courttings? If the exchequer was low one day, it would be full to overflowing the next, when their luck should turn; and their belief in Luck was so superstitiously strong that it became a fetish with them that all should revere and bow to it—especially Good Luck.

How, when they were all at home, they managed for sleeping quarters, it would be impossible to conjecture, for their apartments were not numerous. They had one enormously large room though, which served as the general, dining, sitting, smoking, and universally useful apartment. A long dining-table stood in the centre, half littered with play books, play bills, operas, songs, and shilling shockers. The mantelshelf was covered with letters, tobacco pipes, boxes of matches, and photographs, with here and there an odd vase or ornament in a semi-state of revolt and demolition, while an old marble clock, always two hours and seventeen minutes fast, stood, with broken columns, half rakishly in the middle. The pier-glass had quite a remarkable crack from one corner to the centre, and then back again down to the other corner, decked with unpaid bills, a number of pawntickets, and a number of visiting cards. The walls were covered with lithographs of actors and actresses, with here and there a scene from a popular drama, and one or two photographs and sketches in frames. A bookcase stood on one side, with the books all higgledy-piggledy—novels, theatrical biographies, "Manners and Tone of Good Society," with a broken back and dilapidated covers; a book on Thrift; Shakespeare; Lord Byron; a catalogue of stage costumes; a "Child's Guide to Heaven"; "Charley Wagg"; "Confessions of a Madman"; "The Ballet-girl and the Bishop"; "Pilgrim's Progress"; and a most eccentric collection of verse and parodies, called "The Devil's Dance round the Cauldron," with many others placed inharmoniously together. In one corner of the room stood an old grand piano. The music-stool was a wooden one with three legs, and under the

piano were hundreds of songs and pieces of music, piled heterogeneously one on top of the other, crossways and any way. Then you came upon more printing—posters, pictures, newspapers, back numbers of the *Era* and the *Stage*, and theatrical and illustrated papers of all degrees.

Unless there was a rehearsal call, the girls never dressed until after the mid-day meal, but prowled about the room, or lounged on the sofa, whose fourth leg having departed was supplied by an inverted champagne case. Striped petticoats, with a shawl or one of their brothers' jackets, formed the morning costume—Judy being particularly fond of wearing Macready's velvet coat, with a feminine silk handkerchief, trimmed with lace, to go round her neck. Mrs. Best, or the Grand Duchess, who filled the duties of cook and housekeeper with Cinderella, wore a faded dressing-gown with a long train, that was always getting caught by nails and fast-shutting doors.

I had the privilege of being present one morning at a family conclave, when ways and means were discussed with an abandon and open confidence that was singularly embarrassing. Both girls had their hair in papers, and both were *en deshabille*—Judy wearing the inevitable velvet jacket and saucy tie, and Cinderella a bright pink shawl and striped petticoat, which was short enough to show that she had a weakness for red stockings with clocks. But let me hasten to say, though their costumes were original and not always too abundant, they were virtuous girls, and, in their way, quite modest, notwithstanding that their language was a trifle free. They were not prudes, for they were not hypocrites, and I have found your average prude a fraud. All the members of this remarkable family were present, together with Judy's admirer, Punch, Sam Maple, the low comedian. It was in July, and as all the theatres were fast closing, they, having no capital, were thinking of doing the "smalls" with a variety entertainment, the company to consist en-

tirely of themselves. Much beer and tobacco were consumed during the debate as to what small pieces they could play, and of what the programme should consist. And here let me relate an artful little trick of the governor's. He had a large tobacco jar which he kept religiously locked up until visitors called, when it was brought forward and each caller was permitted to place therein an ounce of tobacco for the good of the paterfamilias! Punch Maple and I complied with the custom, and so did the sons, so that Tom Best must have had tobacco enough to last him for a month. Punch was too busy talking to Judy to smoke much—they were both engaged to play in pantomime together at Christmas, and during the run they were to be married.

Naturally, much irrelevant matter was introduced and gossiped over, and many anecdotes were told, and the time sped so fast that it was two o'clock before anything was settled. Then said Tom Best magnificently, "Ladies and gentlemen—Cindy, my dear, you've got a hole in your stocking—ladies and gentlemen, let us have some lunch: a cold collation—ham, beef, pickles, lettuce, and beer. Judy, my love, when you and Punch have fully rehearsed your Romeo and Juliet scene, will you return to *terra firma* and assist the Grand Duchess and the maiden of the glass slippers to place the viands on the table?" And then, turning to us, he added, "Come, boys! let us adjourn to the nearest hostelry to refresh, while the ladies prepare us a surprise."

While we were getting our hats to put this suggestion into execution, I noticed a hurried consultation, in which the magic word, "money," played a conspicuous part, brought to a joyous climax by Judy, whose face had been suspiciously near Punch's, holding up half a sovereign, which she had certainly obtained from her sweetheart. And why not? As they made no secret of the matter, and as Tom Best said, we were all one of a family—Bohemians to the welts of our shoes—I felt less constrained than I otherwise should have

done. Well, we returned to the luncheon. The girls were dressed in cool, sweet-looking costumes, and Mrs. Best was attired gorgeously. We all thoroughly enjoyed that more or less impromptu meal, and drank our beer like Britons. They decided during the afternoon on what they would play, and cast the pieces. Tom was to be stage manager, the Grand Duchess was to take the money, and Macready was to preside at the piano and be the band. Punch was the low comedian, and Judy the chambermaid, while Cinderella would play the juveniles and leads. If necessary, the Grand Duchess would come on for old women. William, called Maximilian for brevity's sake, was the heavy man, and Charley, otherwise Boggles, the light. And I heard afterwards that their tour was very successful.

One feature about this Bohemian family was their unaffected generosity and willingness to help a friend in distress. And, wonder of wonders, they knew the meaning of gratitude. They all prospered in a way, but the restlessness of their temperament and their ignorance of the value of money prevented all, except Cinderella, from rising into great prominence. Cinderella was gifted with a beautiful soprano voice, and she knew how to look after Number One. But I doubt if even she ever conquered the inbred Bohemianism that belonged to the family. Unconventionality with them was not a dream but a reality, and they bore the stamp of all their tribe.

Dear old Tom Best, with his cheery, clean-shaven face and twinkling brown eyes, still haunts the land of his birth, just as full of schemes and carelessness as ever, just as energetic in doing nothing, and just as frank and happy as one could desire. May it be many years before we have to say peace to his manes.



### XIII.

#### *AN ACTRESS'S HUSBAND.*

THERE is an axiom current in theatrical circles that actors and actresses should never marry out of the profession. The axiom is good, and cannot be controverted, especially as applying to actresses. An actor may espouse a private lady, or one in another profession, and, if she be not foolishly jealous, there's no reason why they should not live happily together. But with an actress it is an entirely different matter, unless, of course, she retires from the stage entirely, and means more frequently than not that one who marries an outsider is doomed to disappointment and misery.

Perhaps this is why so many actresses choose their life-partners from almost every rank and profession but the one they actually belong to themselves. Unequal marriages in the social world are a curse, but unequal marriages in the artistic world—one nature artistic and the other commercial or philistine—are damnation. Artistic natures crave for sympathy, and sympathy requires reciprocity. A nature that is capable of originating, creating, or portraying—poetry, painting, playing—must not be gauged by the ordinary standard of human passions and human beings, but must be taken as it is, with all its lights and shades, its impetuosity and enthusiasm, its folly and its wisdom, otherwise there is no understanding the highly strung brain and nervous tension which are its chief characteristics.

One of the sweetest and most charming little actresses that ever captivated a British audience was Minnie Thornton, a singer, a dancer, a comédienne; and many a love-

lorn swain sighed at her feet to gain even a smile from her pouting lips and happy face. Scarcely an actor engaged at the same theatre with her but immediately fell a victim to her witchery; scarcely a bachelor who knew her could resist the charm of her face and manner. That she received many proposals goes without saying, and her worshippers went disconsolately away, to admire at a distance and perhaps pine in secret.

But one actor's passion was so deep and pathetic that though she refused him more than once it was patent to all who saw them together—for they were acting in the same piece—that his love was not cooled by rejection, but rather increased and developed. For the third time she refused this poor fellow, Jack Arlingford—"Handsome Jack Arlingford," as he was affectionately called, for his heart was handsome as well as his face—without assigning any reason; in fact, she confessed that she liked him, but—it was impossible.

Not long after this it was publicly announced that Miss Minnie Thornton was about to be joined in holy matrimony to Mr. Gustavus Davidson, a gentleman of means—a stockbroker—and Jack Arlingford threw up his engagement, and went to America, broken-hearted, so the gossips said.

Much to the regret of playgoers, Minnie Thornton took a farewell of the stage and retired into private life on her marriage, for ever, it was stated. But, strange to say, sixteen months afterwards, she re-appeared, and took her old position on the boards. Why she took this step was not known for a long time, and then ugly rumours began to circulate, and domestic infelicity was hinted at. That perplexing phrase "incompatibility of temper" was freely floated, and very quickly scandal began to take a definite form. Minnie's husband was a blackguard, Minnie's husband was a rogue, Minnie's husband was a bankrupt. This latter assertion, at any rate, proved true, and injudicious specula-

tion was put down as the cause. If that were all, Minnie was only doing her duty, and acting nobly, by turning her talent to account to assist her husband in the hour of his need, until he could right himself again. Minnie could always command at the lowest twenty pounds a week, so no doubt they would soon tide over the present difficulties. Unfortunately, there were one or two things that Mr. Gustavus Davidson could not explain with regard to his financial transactions, and the court suspended his discharge for two years, calling upon him meanwhile to refund certain monies, the disappearance of which baffled all inquiries and investigations. Mr. Gustavus Davidson narrowly escaped being imprisoned for fraud.

Again was malicious-tongued Rumour busy with her insinuations. Mr. Gustavus Davidson was accused of wasting his days and nights in riotous conduct and living. He was always to be found at a certain club notorious for its orgies and midnight entertainments of a doubtful character. He was further charged with living upon his wife's earnings, without attempting in the slightest degree to obtain any employment or to regain his lost position in the City and on 'Change, and, worse still, cruelty was indicted against him as a husband and as a father, for one little girl had been born to them. In course of time his atrocious conduct became the open talk of the town. That he neglected and ill-treated his wife was common knowledge at the theatre where Minnie was engaged, and many besought her to obtain a divorce and so free herself of a scoundrel who was ruining her life. But she would not, for the sake of her child, she said, never heeding the advice that it was more for the sake of her child that she should break the chain that bound her.

For two years Minnie bravely worked on, trying to shield her husband, and trying to make light of her troubles, and the awful life she was leading—she slaving for money which

he immediately seized and wasted. For disorderly conduct and drunkenness he had been turned out of the theatre, and forbidden to enter either at the stage-door or in front of the house. Jack Arlingford was back in London, and heard of the story; and men feared that he might take it upon himself to chastise Gustavus Davidson, though he did keep away from Minnie, and even avoided her until she cried in despair that all her friends were deserting her. He was offered an engagement at the theatre to act with Minnie again; but he bravely declined, and acted elsewhere, all the time watching over and ready to render her assistance if necessary.

One night Minnie appeared in her part wearing, instead of a low-neck, a high-neck dress, and she was ghastly white, and trembled like a leaf all through the first act. Then the manager came round and demanded to know why she had changed her costume. She would not tell, and burst into tears.

"That scoundrel has been up to some of his tricks again, I suppose," he muttered, as he turned away mollified by her distress. And then he whispered to another actress, "Find out what's the matter, and let me know."

That night, when she was dressing to go home, the actress, who dressed in the next room to hers, came in just as she was changing her bodice, and saw a deep red scar right across the top of her breast. It was too late to hide it, and the truth came out. Her husband, in a fit of delirium, struck her while she was nursing her baby—struck her with his walking-stick, and caused a dreadful wound. Then there was a hubbub, and the cowardly wretch was castigated by the press right and left. And London became so hot for him that he tried to escape to the Continent. He had failed, however, to make good the monies he had received, and the official receiver applied for a warrant for his apprehension. Just as he was stepping on the boat for Boulogne,

an officer tapped him on the shoulder and took him into custody. He was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for receiving money under false pretences.

Meanwhile, Minnie, at the urgent entreaties of her best friends, obtained a divorce from him, and soon after her baby died. This was a cruel blow to her, and made her almost inconsolable. Time, however, softened the pangs of her heart, and she once more resumed her profession.

Jack Arlingford and she became friends again—intimate friends and constant companions. She knew that he was wooing her, though he spoke no word of love. Once when he was very tender and attentive to her, she said, "Not just yet, dear old Jack—not yet, not while he lives!"

And Jack bowed his head in acquiescence to her wish. His heart was heavy, but hope bade him be of good cheer, so they went on in the old innocent way—he devoted, she touched and almost content. In course of time, Jack accepted an engagement to star in the provinces, and then, when he was gone, she knew for the first time how necessary he was to her happiness. They corresponded with each other like sweethearts. He pleaded with her to be merciful—she evaded the point in the kindest way possible, and encouraged him to write more and more.

She had old-fashioned ideas, and through a misconception of her position, though she was legally divorced, she still held the blackguard who had so maltreated and deceived her to be her husband. And nothing that Jack could say would shake the conviction she had arrived at.

For three years Jack wooed, and for three years Minnie caressed and petted him, till at last Jack could bear the suspense and agony no longer. He told her it would be better for them to cease their close friendship, as she would not marry, and to prevent all uncertainty and uneasiness he declared he should go to the Antipodes. Womanlike, she suspected that some one had supplanted her in his affections,

and began to weep. He assured her she was mistaken. It was only because he loved and respected her so much that he was going away. She begged him to give her a week to think over what she should say, and he consented.

At the expiration of six days she wrote to him simply :

“ Dear old Jack—

“ I will marry you.

“ MINNIE.”

The evening papers of the same date contained a notice of the suicide of Gustavus Davidson.

## XIV.

### *HOW IT CAME TO PASS.*

It was this way. Young Mark Ambrose, the dramatic critic and poet, had written a play which he was particularly anxious Miss Montessor, the society actress and beauty, should accept and produce. So he approached her on the subject, and after making many appointments that she never kept, and after keeping poor Ambrose dancing attendance at the stage-door until the scene men and hall porter got abominably familiar, he was one fine morning admitted to her presence, with his manuscript under his arm. Miss Montessor was all smiles and graces, and Mark Ambrose began to lose his heart as well as his head, until recalled to everyday matters by the actress, who asked about his play. Ambrose was ready in an instant, gave her a carefully written-out cast of the piece, explained the action and scenery, and commenced to read the first act. Miss Montessor was charmed, then she thought that it wasn't quite clear; but perhaps all would be explained as the reading proceeded.

Quite elated, the author prepared to recite the second act, when a shrill voice called, "Miss Montessor—stage is waiting for your scene!" How annoying! Miss Montessor was profuse with her apologies, but she must attend the rehearsal, as it was for her benefit on the following Monday. Would he mind calling to-morrow—no, not to-morrow, the next day—no, she would write, she really was so busy! Half in a dream, the young dramatic aspirant shook the

pretty actress by the hand, found his way down the winding staircase, across the back of the stage, and into the street.

Feverishly he waited for the promised letter; he was on thorns, only a third of his play read, and days elapsing before he could read the rest—why, she would forget all about it. Well, he could read the first act again. Saturday morning came, and still no communication. Monday was her benefit, and she left town after that for a long tour. Agony! What could he do? Happy thought, she was going to play "The Simple Maid" for her benefit; he would write her some verses, an ode on the subject; he had already praised her acting, years ago, in rhyme. So he sat down and composed a really meritorious little poem, which he named "The Simple Maid, respectfully dedicated to Miss Montressor." Miss Montressor was delighted, but she greatly feared that she would not be able to hear Mr. Ambrose's play now; but if he liked to send it to her, she would peruse it at her leisure. She was really very sorry, and Mr. Ambrose was very kind—it was very unfortunate. Poor Ambrose felt that it was, and could hardly keep down a choking sensation in his throat—he was so disappointed. However, there was no help for it; he was a nobody, and must be content to wait and put up with rebuffs and disappointments.

Miss Montressor duly went on tour with her comedy company, and took Mark Ambrose's new play with her, he having at her special request ante-dated the play about a hundred years, which entailed his entirely rechristening the cast, and almost rewriting the play, on account of the references, diction, and general style. Weeks, months, a year passed away, and still he received no tidings of his play; he repeatedly wrote, but no answer came. In sheer desperation he asked for the return of his piece, in order that he might submit it elsewhere; for managers, seeing that he was rapidly



making headway in other walks of literature, began to think it worth while to consider his epistles, and just occasionally look at his dramatic works. But Miss Montessor did not write, she did not send back his manuscript, and, in fact, appeared to utterly ignore him. Sick at heart, and weary with waiting, Mark Ambrose decided to act for himself, and make a fresh copy of the piece, in which he had so much faith. To work he went with a will, and soon completed his task, making it, as he originally intended, a modern comedy with the first cast. He then submitted it to a young actress, Miss Sybil Sage, who had just made a great hit, and she promised that she would carefully consider it, and eventually she accepted it, and began to get it ready for production under a new title.

Meanwhile, Miss Montessor had produced two new plays in the country by well-known authors, and both were dire fiascos. Miss Montessor was in despair, and knew not what to do. She had taken a theatre in London for six months, and had nothing to produce! Suddenly she remembered Ambrose's piece. She eagerly read it, and was surprised to find it so good. She would produce it! She called rehearsals at once, and resolved to get the piece in fairly good trim before she informed the author of her intention. It would be such a beautiful surprise for him. One day, when she was thinking of writing to him, a letter came from Ambrose to the effect that to prevent all mistakes he wrote to Miss Montessor, to whom he presented his compliments, to inform her that he had disposed of the piece, and therefore Miss Montessor would greatly oblige by returning the MS. without delay!

Here was a pretty state of affairs! Miss Montessor refused to comply with his request, and insisted upon producing the play, as he had so earnestly desired her years ago. Then he appealed to Miss Sage, but she was obdurate; the part suited her exactly! Why in the world did he want

to withdraw at the last moment? Mark Ambrose was in a dilemma. All his life his ambition had been to have a play produced, and now he was praying that he had never seen a theatre. If these two women kept to their word, and both produced his play—one as an eighteenth-century and the other as a nineteenth-century comedy—the critics would scent the similarity afar, and he would be ruined and denounced as a literary fraud. Should he take either or both of the ladies into his confidence? No, for that would make matters worse. He had already begged and prayed of them to release him, but they both refused, and the more he pleaded the more they resolved to go on. Consequently he gave in, and was forced to bow to their decisions. So he would keep the horrible secret to himself, and chance to the alteration of the husband in the old-fashioned piece to an elderly rake; the husband in the modern piece being under age and a ward in Chancery. One comfort, the names in the cast were all different.

What an age of misery the wretched author endured during the fortnight of preparation! Journeying between London and Manchester to attend rehearsals, excited, worried, and half crazy. At last the first night arrived of the modern comedy in London. It was an enormous success! The critics could not praise it too much, and Ambrose felt more miserable than ever. Suppose the other one at Manchester fell flat, or suppose it were a success, and the exact likeness of the plots were discovered! But no, two nights after Miss Montessor put the other piece on, and it created a greater furore than the other! It was a complete example of last-century manners and customs, the papers said, and decidedly original; and the London journals quickly endorsed the Manchester verdict. Both pieces ran simultaneously in London for eight months without the critics seeing that the plays were identical, simply owing to the difference in the periods of action! Ever after Mark Ambrose was con-

sidered the foremost dramatist of the day, and it was always with a very meaning wink in his left optic that he referred to his two first pieces both being played at the same time but he never told them how it came to pass.

## XV.

### *MY FIRST PANTOMIME.*

WHEN the trusty manager of the Theatre Royal, Manford, approached me on the subject, I was naturally flattered, and over a friendly glass of a popular liquor we fully entered into the details requisite for the writing of a new and original pantomime on a very old and threadbare subject—to wit, “Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp, or the Wicked Uncle who proved a Great Scamp.” The manager himself suggested the title, which I, in duty bound, was compelled to accept. With the laudable object of departing from the beaten track of my predecessors in the same line, I read up my “Arabian Nights” afresh, and laid in a stock of all the “books” I could obtain on the subject—not to imitate them, but to avoid the pitfalls and the execrable jokes of which I felt sure the various writers had been guilty. Being new to the business, I was full of enthusiasm and puns, and devoted very considerable time and attention to evolving fresh witticisms, “situations,” and surprises. I wanted it to be, as it were, a pantomime of impromptus, and consequently had plenty of hard work before me to invent repartees for the spur of the moment. Need I say that I was a slave to my own incubus—that I had Aladdin on the brain? I refer you to those who suffered most from my verbal atrocities for confirmation. I lived in an atmosphere of pantomime fairy palaces and deftly rescued Joe Millers for weeks, and I am proud to say that I turned out a piece the like of which was never seen before nor since.

I read it to my friends and relations, treated my better

half to jokes she could not see, and lulled my baby to sleep with the quaint comic songs that I had evolved out of my own quaint, inner consciousness. I went through it with the manager of the theatre, and he declared it to be "rumbo"; and very soon the piece was put into rehearsal. In the simplicity of my confiding nature I had written my pantomime on strictly legitimate lines, believing that experienced actors and actresses would be engaged in its representation. Alas! the guilelessness of the provincial poet! I was the *Penny Trumpet* Tennyson, by the way. Little did I dream that my bantling would be tossed and tumbled about among a strange body of people known as "variety artistes"! But so it was, as you shall hear. The rehearsals commenced with a splendid burst of excitement and enthusiasm, though I soon discovered, greatly to my chagrin, that the author of the pantomime was absolutely nobody at all.

The stage-manager was ostensibly there to see to the production, and control everything and everybody generally. But somehow, generally speaking again, everything and everybody controlled him. Instead of the story being allowed to develop itself in a sequential and consistent manner, with the aid of the text and the "business" I had myself invented, I learned, to my horror, that it was the variety artistes who had to be developed and not the plot. The variety artistes were each and all engaged specially to "do" their special tricks, songs, dances, etc.; and so, with a weary heart and a stumpy pen, I had to sit down and write up the dialogue to fit the eccentricities of each individual performer. Halfway through the first scene the chief low comedian incontinently cut my comic song, and insisted upon singing his own world-known ditty, "Go and tell your ma I've brought the washing home." Of course, it had nothing at all to do with the plot or the characters—indeed, it was singularly irrelevant—but what could I do? Everybody said it was the right thing to do, so in it went. Then the

leading lady, who was to play Aladdin, declared, with many cockneyisms, that she would introduce her patriotic ballad, "To Die or Never," referring, of course, to her own native land in the heart of China. I remonstrated, and begged her to tell me where the sense of "To *Die* or Never" came in? She got quite cross, and as she was not a great hand at spelling herself, desired her sister to come forward. Her sister came forward and exclaimed vehemently, "D-i-y spells die, don't it?" It began to dawn upon me "To-day or Never" was the title of the song. Strange way variety artistes have of pronouncing simple words!

Well, by dint of much control of temper, I chopped and changed my pantomime to suit the company. I raised no protest when the Brothers Flim-Flam (negro-knockabout and dance artistes) discarded the parts written for them and brought forward their own "Cackle," as they termed it. They arranged to come on from opposite sides of the stage, so that they could meet in the centre, as though they were utter strangers to each other. This was what they said—at least, what the one said, for the other brother, it appeared, could not "study" any lines, however simple:—

Why, gracious me! this is a lucky chance!  
And now we're here, suppose we have a dance!

Could anything be more ingenious? They did their dance, and knocked themselves about until the gallery boys (on Boxing Night) threatened to have a huge fit of apoplexy, so greatly did they enjoy the real, unaffected British humour of a couple of men tripping each other up and knocking each other about. The Sisters Fron-Frou were very pretty truly, and wore the shortest skirts I have ever seen. They sang a chaste lyric all about "The Young Man at the Corfee Shop what serves the 'Am and Heggs." The princess, very comely, with lustrous eyes and a tip-tilted nose, informed me herself that at the 'alls she was known as the Queen of Terpsichoar.

However, she was graceful, and, as the Brothers Flim-Flam remarked, "quite the lydy." The gentleman who was engaged to juggle and swallow swords and execute all sorts of marvellous sleight-of-hand tricks rejoiced in a Japanese name so long that it took two strong men a couple of days to pronounce. I should never have known he was not a Japanese if he had not spoken to me. He said, as a sort of introductory greeting, "Well, cully, them tricks is snide, ain't they?" Then I felt convinced he was not Japanese. The manager told me in confidence that Whitechapel was the village the Japanese was born in.

It is scarcely necessary for me to state that very little of my pantomime, as originally written, was spoken on the opening night. Indeed, the artistes did pretty much as they pleased; and as they pleased the audience, I suppose one ought to be content. The ballet was a great success, and so it ought to have been if experience goes for anything, for I am sure the ladies who consented to wear invisible garments made of gauze must have been well grounded in their profession—they had all been in it so long. As a matter of fact, the whole pantomime "caught on" tremendously, and the variety artistes established themselves as favourites at once. The manager was so gratified that he asked me to write a pantomime for the next year, but I regretfully declined; and it only remains for me to add, that while the elegant lyrical effusions introduced by the artistes themselves were received with acclaim, and encored over and over again, the only comic song of mine that was sung was a soul-harrowing failure.

## XVI.

### *THE POET'S DREAM.*

JUST off the High Street in an ancient Gloucestershire town, close to an old Gothic archway, in a very unpretentious thoroughfare, studded here and there with cottages and villas, dwelt Mrs. Nugent, with her son Clarence. The house was not a bit like any other house, for all that was to be seen at first was a very large hall, with a very small doorway and a very small door to match, and not until you had advanced quite close would you have felt certain that there was a house there at all; but there was. It stood far back from the road, overgrown with ivy—which in the summer was partially hidden by the honeysuckles that grew in profusion—at the top of a splendid garden nearly a quarter of a mile in length. The place was an old-fashioned freehold, and had been in the possession of the Nugent family for centuries, the present owner, Mrs. Nugent, being a widow with an only child to care for and look after.

As a rule, it is considered a happy combination when a man and wife are of opposite dispositions; but in this case the dissimilarity was so considerable that Mr. Nugent and his wife never agreed, and unkind people assert that he was nagged to death. For despite her many excellent qualities, Mrs. Nugent was obstinate, and very fond of having the last word in every discussion; and Mr. Nugent being a sensitive man, after eight years of misery, succumbed to his wife's tongue and temper, crushed in spirit and sick and weary of living.

Mrs. Nugent was not greatly affected by her partner's



death, and, blind as she was, had not the slightest notion that she was the cause of it; so after a few months of what is called decent mourning—what a terrible mockery it is to pretend to wear sackcloth and ashes for a deceased person when a horrible exultation is often holding high revel in the breast!—she entirely forgot her bereavement and plunged into gaiety and society, and soon, all too soon, thought of marriage again, and within twelve months was led to the altar, on this occasion by a wealthy tradesman, utterly devoid of feeling or sentiment, and as they were much alike, they lived in a tolerably comfortable manner. Clarence, who was eight years old, took a dislike to his new father, and in his childish way resented the intrusion of the stranger, and a mutual aversion sprang up between them at once. As her husband was always finding fault with her boy, Mrs. Nugent, now Mrs. Tomlinson, wisely sent him to a boarding-school, where he remained until he was sixteen, only visiting his home for a week each Christmas, and then never with pleasure.

When Clarence was six years gone in his teens, he left school, and at his mother's instigation, being a weak and sickly lad, was allowed to roam about in the meadows and through the woods by the murmuring brooks as he willed. These excursions were the joy of his life, for he loved to ramble about and dream of the future, and such a future as he pictured! Of a highly nervous temperament, he was exceedingly sympathetic and full of aspirations. Passionately fond of poetry, his one great ambition was to be an author, a poet; he ardently longed to traverse the arduous and the frequently unthankful paths of literature. Ah! he little knew what was in store for him. And nothing pleased him better than to wander about in the day, listening to the voice of nature, and in the evening to commit his burning thoughts to paper. For a few months he was uninterrupted and allowed to do as he listed, when his step-

father, who was a very practical man, and did not believe in the too often airy fantasies of the brain, suggested that he should not waste any more time in useless studies, but that he should follow some occupation to keep his mind employed. Clarence was perforce compelled to submit, and he entered the office of a large manufacturing firm as clerk. Of all callings in the world, that of a clerk with its dreary monotony suited him least, and it was not long ere his sensitive and poetical nature revolted against ledgers and day books. In vain he begged to be taken away, and some employment more congenial found for him. Mr. Tomlinson accused him of laziness, and bade him remain where he was, as he could not afford to keep him in idleness. The accusation of idleness stung him to the quick, and he resolved rather to die than merit such a character. So he worked hard and bravely at the desk, and filled up his spare hours by writing verses and reading.

In the course of time he became enamoured of a neighbour's daughter, a pretty, gay, careless little maid, much flattered by the attention he paid her, and the lines he wrote of and to her. Without really knowing it, she captivated the young poet's heart, distracted him with her changeable nature, enchanted him with her vivacity, and ere long he was convinced that without her fame would be valueless, and life not worth living, and he determined to woo and win her for his wife. Meanwhile, the existence he led with his mother and father at home became unbearable, and he pined to be free and master of his own actions. Feeling confident that he would never make a position in the commercial world, and expecting little or nothing from his parents, he decided, with the approval of his sweetheart—for she, Ellen Dantrey, promised to wed none other than he—to throw up his situation, and go to the marvellous city of London, of the rosiness of which place he had heard so much, there to try his fortune as a writer. Despairing of any assistance or

the acquiescence of his lawful guardians, he, after a painful and loving parting with Ellen, departed for the metropolis somewhat downhearted, yet brimful of hope and expectation, with a tender blessing from his love, and a light purse.

Hope is the mainspring of life, and anticipation its curse; it is well to hope, but fatal to anticipate. 'Twere better far to be a contented drudge than to possess brains above the ordinary level; 'twere better to be born a bricklayer's labourer than a genius, for in both cases either starvation or never satisfied greatness is the inevitable climax, and whichever happens—according to the cast of the die—a man's shortcomings are ever brought up in judgment against him, and his virtues buried in a chasm of forgetfulness and mocking hypocrisy. A man who implicitly trusts mankind generally is written down by those he believes in as an ass; and a man who relies on the honesty of mankind individually is a fool, and not capable of battling with the heartlessness and hollowness of the major part of the earth's inhabitants. It is a melancholy truth that, if a being wishes to succeed in life, he must have no scruples, and, as a rule, must never do more than he is paid to. To slave for another is rank idiocy, and merits the reward it invariably obtains—spurns and ingratitude.

Clarence Nugent journeyed to London expecting to gain fame and fortune very quickly, and in his mind's eye saw himself a celebrated man, married to the girl of his choice, and enjoying peace and plenty. Happy those blessed with undying expectancy! With a light heart he engaged apartments in a semi-genteel, half-decayed street in Bloomsbury, and for a week or two visited the picture galleries, libraries, museums, and everything laid down by an unknown and despotic power, which insists on the infliction of a certain number of "sights" which *must* be seen. Then he began to consider what was the best thing to do, and finally settled upon calling on the various and varied publishers that

abounded and abound. He tried them all. The stereotyped "declined with regrets and thanks" he at first received as the greatest courtesy, but after awhile he began to grow sick and weary with disappointments and rebuffs, and it became hateful to him and palled on his senses. Meeting with no encouragement or opportunity to publish his poems in volume form, he tried the magazines, with little better success, for although some accepted his contributions, with one or two exceptions he obtained no payment for them, and every day he felt more miserable and wretched, for the dream of his life seemed farther off than ever. He had letters from Ellen occasionally, which gave him fresh vigour for the nonce; but despondency soon took possession of him, for each epistle he received was like a stab, for somehow they grew cold and arrived less frequently. Was she tired of waiting, or had some one else stolen her love from him? He became desperate, and commenced anew to try to dispose of his writings, and he called so often on the publishers that at last they refused to see or take notice of him; he lost the few commissions he had, and was often deceived by those whom he had honourably and faithfully served.

Two, three, four years elapsed, and he saw no more prospect of gaining the object he left his native place for than when he first set foot in London. And he was infinitely poorer—in fact, he was on the point of starvation. He had never once communicated with his parents, and now he was too proud to let them know his position; he had always kept back the truth from Ellen, being ever sanguine, and he ever referred to that glorious day which never came. And even if he had written otherwise it would have made no difference, for Mr. Tomlinson had commanded his wife not to correspond with or seek to see her son, and hard and thoughtless as she was, she did not attempt to question her husband's words, or the harshness and cruelty of the decision. So Clarence Nugent gradually sunk and sunk, worn out in body

and! his spirit blighted—with only sufficient hope to exist from week to week, sustaining himself and killing himself with thoughts of the past, and what might have been if fate had been kinder—fate, pshaw! what is fate and destiny? humbug! the secret of the rise and fall of every life is circumstance and influence—and slowly and certainly the young poet languished away, unknown and uncared for, a genius wasting for want of nourishment and advice; but what did it matter? It would only be one creature less in the vortex of dissipation, wealth, and hypocrisy!

And there, in the house of his childhood, in his father's house, every one was happy and contented, and other children, half-brothers and sisters whom he had never seen or heard of, played round his mother's knee, and at night knelt down and repeated the same prayer that he used to repeat, and chanted the same hymns that he used to chant, and received the same blessing that he used to receive. And his mother thanked God that she had done her duty as well as she was able, and lay down to rest satisfied with her own goodness, quite forgetful of her firstborn. She had no thought for him; she had other children to look after now, who were not the offspring of the man she did not love.

One lovely morning in the spring of the year, when the trees were full of fresh green buds, and all nature seemed in her best mood, and all the town wore its brightest aspect, a gay wedding took place at the grand old church at the foot of the hill, and the bride was Ellen Dantrey, who years ago betrothed herself to Clarence Nugent, but of course that was a stupid mistake of a girl; besides, nobody knew where he was, and he must be poor, or he would have written, and he had not done so for years. So the bridal party returned to the wedding breakfast, and among the guests were Mr. and Mrs. Tomlinson; and just when the bride had wept the customary tears, and the usual speeches were being made, a telegram was brought in for Miss E. Dantrey; the newly

married girl tremblingly took it, and nervously opened it. She read out aloud, without knowing why—"Come at once. Clarence Nugent wishes to see you before he dies," and fainted.

Considerable excitement prevailed, and it was presently settled that Mrs. Tomlinson, and Ellen and her husband, should proceed to London to the address indicated, and there in a garret lay the lifeless body of Clarence Nugent—for they arrived too late—a mere skeleton, and hardly to be recognised. Ah! then came the remorse and agony of useless regret, and then the truth of terrible negligence and selfishness was conjured up in its most awful aspect, and—and after the corpse was under the churchyard sod, every thought, everything was banished, to recur doubly when a well-known firm brought out a volume of poems that created a sensation throughout the length and breadth of the land, and advertised for the author, Clarence Nugent.

## XVII.

### STAGE SLANG.

STAGE slang is probably as old as the stage itself. No doubt Thespis had a command of many choice expressions which he hurled at the populace from his perambulating cart; and many of the perverted words and phrases in use at the present day can, not with great difficulty, be traced to Shakespeare's days and Shakespeare's plays. The word "show," to begin with, meaning the performance and the play indifferently, is to be found in the Tragedy of Young Pyramus and his Love Thisbe, in the comedy of *Midsummer Night's Dream* :—

"The actors are at hand, and by their show  
You shall know all that you are like to know."

And again :—

"Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show."

At any rate, a theatrical entertainment, from the thrilling Richardson up, has ever been known as a "show." And not long ago all actors, especially in the country, were known as "show folk," which was more polite than the "vagabond" of our Acts of Parliament, only some few years ago rescinded. Another term uttered with considerable trepidation is the query, "Does the ghost walk?" meaning is there any "treasury," or, in plain English, any salary to be paid or received? This also comes from the Bard; and it was a customary thing for doubtful expectants to say to their fellows, in the words of Marcellus, "Has this thing

appeared?" referring, of course, in the play to the Ghost of Hamlet's father. If the reply were in the affirmative, their joy once more reigned supreme, for it was known that "the ghost walked," and that wages were forthcoming, not as usual, but rather "in the palmy days" as unusual; for the spectre was shy, and frequently put in no appearance at all.

Actors are astonishingly fond of abbreviations, and herein lies most of their slang. They love to call themselves "pros.," and their calling they designate "*the* profession." Properties are shortened to "props.," and business to "biz;" of this latter there being three qualities. "Good business" indicates a full and paying "house," or theatre, or audience, and "bad business" naturally the reverse. But the business of the stage, from an artistic point of view, is the most important of all. The "business" of a play is, as everybody knows, the action and work and by-play of the performers, and the business of a part may be traditional, or invented by the performer for the time being. It is noteworthy that in the early manuscripts and printed copies of the first plays very little, if any, business was marked, even the exits and entrances, whether right or left, being omitted. In none of Shakespeare's, or Ben Jonson's, or contemporary dramatists' works was the business given; and it has all been added since by the various players. And to this day certain special business is unrecorded, and only handed down from generation to generation, from the old actor to the young. This refers to special things done in nearly all the standard pieces. When an actor undertakes a new character in a new play, he "creates" the character and the "business" (with the assistance of the author) as well, elaborating it every time he acts it. Thenceforth, actors being absurdly conservative in all things, each player of that part reintroduces the same "business," no matter how unnecessary or out of keeping it may be. With farces, when the business of any



particular character in any particular farce is so great as to overshadow the other characters, the piece is known by that character. *Raising the Wind*, for instance, is known as "Jeremy Diddler's piece."

"Props.," referred to above, include everything kept in the theatre for use on the stage, and are known as the manager's "props." All pieces of furniture used in a scene are "props." A mask, a sword, a stage letter, a bunch of flowers, a fan, are all "props.," and the very clothes that the players wear in their parts are "props.," and are jealously guarded while not in use, in the private "prop." basket of the player. Sometimes one may meet in the Strand an actor who has been out of a "shop"—all engagements being called "shops," as well as the playhouses—a long time, who having run through, or run into Attenborough, his ordinary wardrobe, will be wearing his "props." to keep up an appearance. The initiated, however, can always detect the "props." from the customary garb. For even in these days of long runs and enormous salaries play-acting is not all beer and skittles, though much beer may be consumed. As in all professions, and the actor's is the most precarious, next to literature, it is only to the few that princely incomes fall.

"Fat" is slang for good or telling speeches; and a "fat part" is a part so full of points that, in stage vernacular, it "plays itself." That is to say, the language of the part is so rich with gallery or popular lines that the actor has only to deliver his "cackle" to "bring down the house." To "swallow the cackle" is to learn a part. "To crack a wheeze" is to originate something smart, or to say something at the right moment, whether original or borrowed. To "gag" is to invent a joke or speech impromptu, generally to prevent a stage wait when another actor fails to take up his cue. Some actors are very smart at gagging, and have been known to save a play from condemnation by their

promptness; and some are so clever as to be able to gag a whole scene, having no previous, or only very slight, acquaintance with the text. "To wing" means to go through a part without knowing the text. And "to pong" is equivalent to expanding the lines of a part.

A "cue," from the French *queue*, is the tail of a sentence, or catch-word which indicates when another actor is to speak, and must be taken up at once. Bottom says, "When my cue comes, call me and I will answer." It may happen that an actor will know nothing whatever of the play in which he is taking part, beyond his own "lines" and the cues which guide him. This is undoubtedly the case in manuscript plays—not at all a healthy system of study if a character is to be consistently portrayed. Actors do not "learn" their parts, they "study" them, and they measure each part by "lengths," a "length" being forty-two printed lines. Hamlet is the longest part in the whole drama, British and foreign.

To "queer a manager's pitch" is to disappoint him. Is this a remnant of the travelling booth days, when all concerned had to lend a hand to pitch the tents? To "dry a man up" is to give him the wrong cue, or to say something aside to the actor, not intended for the audience, which may disturb his equanimity. To be "fluffy" in a part is to be uncertain of the words, and to hesitate and "fluff" through the scene. A "fluffer" is an untrustworthy man, and detested all round. To "guy" an actor is to hiss and hoot him, and to convert him into a laughing stock for the gods and man. "Gods," by the way, as applied to the gallery, no doubt took its origin from the custom, now out of date, of painting the gallery ceiling to resemble sky, as suggestive of the home of the celestials. The French call this portion of the house "*paradis*."

The habit of classifying players according to their line of business is now gradually falling into disuse. "Heavies," or the "heavy man," would be given such parts as Iago and

all villains. Jim Dalton, *alias* the Tiger, in *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, is a "character" part; so is also the Spider in *The Silver King*. Hamlet is the "lead," Laertes the "leading juvenile," and Horatio, though an excellent part, is known as the "walking gentleman." Then there are the "low comedian," the "light comedian," the "old woman" (first and second), "chambermaid," "singing chambermaid," and "boy," which last is almost invariably played by a girl. Companies in the provinces are "on the road," another relic of the past; and minor companies with "fit-ups"—that is, companies carrying their own theatre, comprising scenes, props., curtains, wings, etc.—who visit small towns and villages for one-night performances, are said to be "doing the smalls."

There are to every play a number of "plots," each plot having significant reference to each part of the play, as the scene plot, the property plot, the flyman's plot, the gasman's plot, etc. The property plot falls to the property, or in small companies to the prompter, and he is bound to see each night that all personal and stage "props." are in their right places for immediate use. And the "tag" is the end of the play—the last line spoken, in rhyme or otherwise—just as this sentence is the end of this article.

## XVIII.

### *A CRUEL REVENGE.*

THERE are those living who can vouch for the accuracy of this story, which I present unembellished, unvarnished, as it was related to me.

Young Franklin Pedder had been born and bred to the stage. His father was an actor of the good old school, and his mother was an actress of the same class. For generations the Pedders had been actors, and so it was only natural that Master Franklin, when he was old enough, should follow in his ancestors' footsteps. He graduated well under the careful tuition of his parents, and in due time made his first appearance in pantomime; and as a youngster he was such a droll and clever little mimic that great things were predicted of him. His father having strong convictions as to the value of a sound dramatic training, insisted upon his going through the entire dramatic mill, and so he got him an engagement to play small parts, make himself generally useful, and act as call boy, until such time as he should be well versed in all the ins and outs and routine of theatrical life before and behind the curtain. What a pity some of our modern mummers are not compelled to go through the same ordeal, that they might obtain more than the superficial acquaintance with their calling, which seems to be all that is thought necessary now-a-days. In due time young Franklin, being a steady and conscientious student, was promoted to the position of full-blown actor, and entrusted with an original part in a new and original play. The part was only a small one, yet Franklin Pedder was so

much in earnest, and so determined to get on, that on the first night he made quite a hit, and received much praise from the critics and his friends in front. Thenceforward he gradually rose into favour and made commendable strides in the profession. Now, engaged at the same theatre with Pedder was another young actor who was also desirous of getting on, but he was careless and fonder of lounging about and enjoying himself than of applying himself to the real business of the stage, and consequently, instead of making successes as the other did, he only avoided failure by a certain slap-dash way he had with him that impressed the casual observer, though it did not deceive those who knew what legitimate acting meant. This was Joseph Chatsworth, and, in course of time, he grew jealous of Pedder's continued advancement, dissimulating his real feelings, however, by protestations of friendship and sincerity. Pedder was a good friend to him, little guessing the man's real nature; and when times were hard with Chatsworth, frequently assisted him until the clouds should break. Then, as often happens, the two were separated for some length of time. Chatsworth went touring in the provinces, while Pedder remained in London, and so, for awhile, their acquaintanceship was interrupted.

Franklin Pedder had just turned twenty-two when he fell violently in love with a prepossessing, pretty little girl, who was not on the stage at the time, and knew scarcely anything about the people who were. From the first it was a love match, and they were devotedly attached to each other. They met first of all in the North of England, when Pedder was on a tour with the company to which he belonged from the theatre in London; and though, under the circumstances, they could not see much of each other, they corresponded regularly, and in course of time, after six months' violent epistolary courtship, with now and then brief, almost stolen, interviews, which only seemed to fire their ardour and affec-

tion more and more, they decided to join forces in the matrimonial market, and so defy fate and win fortune together. Mary Luke was an orphan and lived with her aunt, who quite approved of the husband her niece had chosen, for she heard good reports of him and knew him to be persevering and energetic. As yet Franklin had not the opportunity to introduce Mary to his mother and father, though they knew of the engagement. Mrs. Pedder, however, wrote a nice agreeable letter to her future daughter-in-law, and wished them both happiness.

It was decided that they should be married at the end of the tour, when Franklin Pedder would have a few weeks to spare before the winter season commenced in London; and with a view to Mary's adopting the stage as a profession, it was arranged that she should take lessons from a certain teacher in the town in which she resided, and when possible, play small parts at the theatre, to get her accustomed to the footlights and audiences. Being a very vivacious and quick girl, the manager of the theatre was only too glad to avail himself of her services as often as he could, and thus it came to pass that when any company came and wanted a lady to play for them, Mary Luke was always the one chosen. And when, in going their rounds, the company to which Joseph Chatsworth belonged came to the Theatre Royal, Brookstone, and as they had just lost one of their ladies, Mary Luke was called in and given a part much longer than she had ever played before. Joseph Chatsworth, who volunteered to "coach" her, was fascinated by the beautiful young novice at once. He flirted with her desperately, and made no secret of his admiration, and at last, the night after Mary had come through her task with flying colours, Joseph Chatsworth made unmistakable love to her; and then, horror-stricken, fearing she had been less reserved than she ought to have been, she burst into tears, and told him she was already engaged to be married.

"Engaged!" he cried blankly. "To whom? Tell me—I will know!"

"To—to Franklin Pedder, the actor," she sobbed.

"Franklin Pedder—Franklin Pedder!" and without saying more, in a daze of wretchedness and despair, he rushed to his dressing-room, and swore with clenched fists that Franklin Pedder—how he hated him!—should not have her; but that he would!

Though a certain amount of restraint existed between the two after this, at the end of the week, on the Saturday night when the company finished their engagement at Brookstone, Chatsworth went up to Mary and said, courteously enough: "Forgive my impetuosity of the other night. I was not aware that you were engaged, or I should not have spoken as I did, believe me. Franklin is an old friend of mine, and the shock was very great. I wish you both happiness, and I trust that we shall not only part friends, but remain friends always."

What could Mary say, or do? She was charmed with his frankness, and said so, and promised that the scene should be forgotten—it was her fault, as much as his, and they would always be good friends. And she added, "Franklin's friends will always be my friends, you know, Mr. Chatsworth. Good-bye." And so they parted.

Owing to the unexpected death of a near relation of Mary Luke's, just a month before she was to be married, the wedding had to be postponed; and then Franklin Pedder met with an accident and injured his leg, so that he was compelled to go to the hospital. Then Mary, with his consent, adopted the stage regularly, and joined a well-known travelling company to gain as much experience as possible prior to making her *débüt* in London.

They were to be married in the spring. Pedder was up and acting again, and counting upon the happiness that he hoped was in store for him with Mary. And they were more

violently attached than ever. Once again Mary Luke came in contact with Joseph Chatsworth—they happened to meet in the streets of Manchester, and had a long chat, and then in the course of conversation Franklin Pedder's name came up again, and she said coyly, "We have only a couple of months to wait now, you know, Mr. Chatsworth, before Franklin and I will be quite sober, married people!"

It was Saturday morning. Chatsworth held the *Era* in his hand, and a fiendish thought flashed through his brain—he could have his revenge on Pedder at one fell swoop—revenge because he had succeeded where he had failed, and revenge because he had won the girl that even now he (Chatsworth) was passionately fond of. He did not give his good angel, if he had one, the smallest chance to intervene, but went recklessly ahead and dealt his blow. Seeing the lovely girl before him, it seems incredible that he should have acted as he did—it must have been momentary madness caused by hopeless love, or what he thought was love, and jealousy.

Then he calmly and deliberately spoke to his blushing companion, who was all unconscious of what the scoundrel had in reserve for her.

"Married, Miss Luke! Good heavens! Why Franklin is already married!"

"It is false," she exclaimed indignantly.

"Do not let us speak here; let us go to the theatre. I am your friend; he *is* married," he replied hurriedly.

"I will not believe it;"

And then she followed him to the theatre.

"Now, Mr. Chatsworth, explain the meaning of this extraordinary statement you have made," she demanded.

"Listen—do not be impatient. Have you seen the *Era* to-day?"

"No."

"Then let me show you." He carefully opened the paper,



and pointed to the report of a benefit performance that had taken place some days previously at a theatre in the Strand, and there in the cast of the play appeared the name of Mr. Franklin Pedder as representing one character and Mrs. Franklin Pedder as representing another.

No word was spoken. Mary turned as white and cold as marble and fainted away. When she regained consciousness, she was ill in bed at her aunt's house in Brookstone. Directly she revived and was strong enough, she asked if any letters had arrived for her. A number from Franklin Pedder were handed to her. She had them done up without reading their contents into a packet, directed them in her own hand to the sender, and had them posted. And herein lay her fault.

She was not ill long, and the first to congratulate her on her recovery was Joseph Chatsworth. She received him coldly, almost with repugnance, and when he once more attempted to make love to her, she cried :

"If you were the last man in the world, I would not marry you. You robbed me of my happiness. Do you think you could give it back? Go!" And Joseph Chatsworth and she met no more. Very soon she affected to laugh at her disappointment, and when an actor who had followed her about with love on his lips and pity in his eyes asked her to marry him, she consented—purely out of audacity and pique, she said, to let Franklin Pedder see that she did not care a bit for his treatment of her.

But soon a reaction set in—her husband was good and kind to her; but, oh! he was not her first, her true love—he was not Franklin Pedder. Had she been too hasty in marrying? Was it really true that he had proved false to her? Surely! Had she not seen it in print—Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Pedder? Ought she not to have read those letters of his?

One night while she was at the theatre, waiting at the wings for her cue, she heard the name of the Pedders mentioned.

"Old Franklin Pedder seems to have made a hit in the new piece at the Banner," one of the actors was saying.

"And so has old Mrs. Franklin P.," chimed in another; "young Franklin ought to be quite proud of his parents."

Almost in a dream, Mary caught these scraps of conversation, and then she heard her cue and went on. How she got through her part that night it is impossible to guess. She was in a frenzy of uncertainty and despair. When she came off again, she sought out the two men who had been talking, and asked them what they meant by "Old Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Pedder"?

"Why, young Franklin Pedder's father and mother," half jocularly replied one of the actors.

And then, seeing the blanched look of misery on Mary's face, he became serious, and inquired what was the matter.

"Nothing—nothing. Answer me this—Is young Mr. Franklin Pedder married?" It was a great effort to ask the question, but she said the words at last.

"Married! No, poor devil! Haven't you heard? He has been half demented through the vile conduct of some girl to whom he was engaged—never would say who—who jilted him for some other fellow. Best chap in the world, Franklin—— Good heavens! What have I said? What have I done? Are you ill?"

"No—no; it will soon pass away;" and then as she turned to go, she cried in her anguish:

"Oh, Franklin! Franklin! You so true, and I so false!"

And then they knew her story.

That night, as one of the actors of the company was returning to his lodging after a card party, and was crossing the bridge that spanned the rapid flowing river, he saw a figure in white leap upon the parapet and disappear into the murky darkness—disappear with a heart-rending cry into the rushing waters below.

When the body was brought ashore it was lifeless, and all that remained of the once beautiful Mary Luke.

To this day nothing has been heard of the villainous Joseph Chatsworth, but Franklin Pedder is still acting—nearly at the top of the tree now, but he has not forgotten the story of his early days, and the image of Mary is engraved on his heart. Poor Franklin!

## XIX.

### *BEHIND THE SCENES.*

BEHIND the scenes! What a world of wonders and intoxicating imagination is conjured up in the lay mind by the bare utterance of this sentence! What marvels and miracles are dreamed by simple, unsophisticated youth upon first visiting the theatre and hearing, perhaps casually, of the extraordinary land that lies behind the scenes, where existence would appear to be made up of perennial sunshine and unceasing pleasures and enjoyments! No profession is invested with such a glamour of ideality as is the stage, and no profession, in all probability, becomes so tawdry and unreal when the skeleton is brought forward divested of its trappings and its tinsels. Happy the mortal who never penetrates behind the scenes to become disillusioned—happy the mortal who can enjoy a play and appreciate the trickery and artifice without ever once finding out how simply it is all done! More than half the charm of all entertainments, exhibitions, and works of art and literature lies in the mystery that envelops their origin and birth; and once this mystery is shattered, the real interest that used to enthrall and perchance enthril is gone, and criticism takes the place of satisfied acceptance. And when the average man takes to criticising all he sees, hears, and reads, he is far more severe and exacting than the professional critic who is paid to instruct the world as to the merits or demerits of the subjects of his review. And as so many men lose interest in the play, poem or book, or picture, because they know the author, or the actor, or the artist,—because, in fact, they have

unwarily been permitted to take a peep behind the scenes,—so they lose the major part of the diversion or entertainment which they would otherwise enjoy. It is not only behind the scenes of the theatre that people now-a-days desire to get, but behind the scenes of the artistic and literary world as well. Popularity seems to be largely gained by the laying bare of the domestic and private life as well as the public. People are not content to take their hero or the favourite as he presents himself in his professional or natural capacity, they must know what he eats and drinks, whether he is happy or not with his wife, or whether he still enjoys the felicity of single-blessedness. They also must be informed how he accomplishes his work, whether he works early or late, and why; and a thousand other impertinences do they demand, until a popular man must be the most wretched being in creation.

It is only of late years that this extraordinary craving has so seized upon the frivolous part of the community, and it is to be deplored that the taste for such minor and almost sacred details is growing—greedily ministered to by papers and periodicals of peculiar sorts and conditions. And yet, what is gained by this morbid and feverish longing for particulars of a clever or eccentric man's mode of life? or the manner in which certain effects are obtained, or certain work executed? Because we know that a particular "star" is a good or bad husband and father off the stage, or has a special fancy for patent leather shoes—does this impressive knowledge make us take more, or less, interest in his acting on the stage? Rather less, we imagine; indeed, with the thoughtful, the acquaintance with these incidents is deeply deplored as tending to spoil one's appreciation of the man's real ability. Oddly enough, it is the women who lead the van in these matters. If a popular actor, so long as he be presentable, if not actually handsome, runs away with somebody else's wife, or is vaguely known to be a rake, he becomes

the idol of the hour, and "draws" the public to his heart's content. But woe betide the actress or the singer who commits such a "mistake" as makes her a public scandal! Then Mrs. Grundy steps in, gathers her skirts about her, and refuses to patronize the "brazen hussey." It used not to be so, but it is now, as some recent incidents of the kind may remind us. Truly it is a mad world, my masters.

Of course there is no denying the fact that publicity and applause are the very breath of the actor; and when publicity is gained in a legitimate way, there can be no cause to object to it. The ordinary interview, when past successes and future hopes are discussed, is indeed of joint service to player and public alike; but it is the prying into the private life of performers, of authors, of artists and journalists—for even they are not exempt from the inquisition now-a-days that I rail against—that all must deprecate. Certainly it is only the lesser and irresponsible journals that go in for this kind of thing; still, the evil exists, and we fear, instead of decreasing, it is increasing. However, I am wandering from the subject. The idea that producing a play or opera is all fun, frolic, and amusement is more prevalent than many suppose. And those outsiders who prattle childishly about the "flies" and the "floats," the "wings" and the "cloths," the "flats" and the "traps," know no more about the real business of the stage than does the artist's model of high art—not so much perhaps.

Ah! the mimic world reached through the portals of the stage-door is a very real and hard and matter-of-fact world indeed for those who inhabit it.

"Those who live to please, must please to live." Sorrow and sickness, disappointment and misery, are too often allied to the calling of raising laughter and causing tears of pity to fall. For actors and actresses are very human, and more susceptible to the pains and penalties of existence than almost any other class. They are so affected, the majority,

by circumstance and outside influences; and they are no worse and no better than their neighbours. Perhaps the hankering for fame, and the ambition to rise and make a name in theatrical history, makes them more jealous and more inclined to be foolishly arrogant than those who follow less exciting callings—in the commercial professions, for instance; but, “be to their faults a little kind,” and a more generous, open-handed, and genial class of people does not exist on the face of the earth. Remember that they are for ever moving in an atmosphere of passion and pathos, of humour and sentiment, of poetry and ideality, and consequently their natures must partake of the beauty and charm that the study of these higher and purer aims of life must always give, and they must not be judged by the ordinary standard, any more than you would compare the genius of a poet with the talent of a mere rhymster, or the genius of an artist with the labour of a house-painter. Not that all are like this, for some are as placid, calm, and unimpressible (apparently) as that extraordinary excrescence the modern masher—though the former possess brains and the latter doesn’t. “Does Punch feel?” has been a question long popular on both sides of the footlights, and it appears to me to be a very idiotic question. It is all according to the temperament of the performer. Some men are excitable, passionate, all nerves and feeling—these are the men who are most affected by the pathos or humour of any part they may be playing. Others are phlegmatic, and though they may have tears in the voice they have few in the heart, and do not feel the tenderness they endeavour to convey. It is the same in all professions. Some authors are so influenced and touched by the pathetic incidents of a scene or chapter that they are writing in a novel as to be quite unable to proceed. They have to throw the pen down and rest, perchance rush out of the house to get away from the reality of their own fiction. On the other hand, there are writers who are little better than machines

when composing their finest incidents—it is all a matter of disposition—whether there be an easy proneness to the melting mood or not. And have we not known and read of musical composers who could write melodies of such surprising sweetness that our very hearts have beaten time to the soothing cadences, and yet has not the conduct of these people been totally opposed to the harmonies of their talents? Impossible people, sometimes, with tempers of their own like other folk. Frequently illogical, and often quite ludicrous by reason of their selfish conduct. Nature and Art are so contradictory that, believe me, it is as well not to inquire too closely into these matters. Let us take the gifts as they come to us, and thank the gods we have the power to appreciate and understand.

But *revenons à nos moutons*. Is there anything to fascinate and impress us behind the scenes of the temples of the drama? Why, yes; no matter how familiar you may become with the musty smell that always seems a concomitant part of all stages, there is an irresistible, inexplicable charm that endears one for ever to the boards. And when one is standing on the stage of a house with a past! When one can conjure up the ghosts of departed players and almost forgotten triumphs! When one can imagine the dressing-rooms and green-rooms haunted with the spirits of those who have gone before—who have shone as stars and made buried audiences alternately cry and laugh at each turn of their dramatic fire and *vis comica*! It sets one a-musing on past times and pastimes, and imagination runs riot in our heads, until we bring all the player folk to life again to join in a mad frolic from midnight until cock-crow. So why should we worry about the cares and anxieties of rehearsals, of the miseries of the wretched author who is badgered and bothered by every one, from the manager down to that twin brother of the printer's devil, the call-boy? Or of the actors and actresses who always declare their parts are not so good as



their previous ones, and that they are *sure* they can't do anything with them? Bless you, it is all affectation and waywardness; for they always do do their best, no matter how they may be harassed or annoyed.

Shall I let you into the secrets of how a play is produced, what it costs mentally, physically, and financially? Perish the thought! I, for one, will not take the gilt off any gingerbread; for in truth, in all affairs theatrical, ignorance is bliss for the play-goer. To know how the traps are worked, how the girls in the transformation scene keep in their positions, or how the moon is made to shine at a moment's notice—surely to know “how it's done” must largely take away from your enjoyment, unless your profession compels you to have any acquaintance with such details? No, let us not destroy our illusions—let us enjoy the play, for the play is the thing where all should be enjoyed.

Recollect, too, that when you are at play they are at work, just as they have a greater part of the year to work when you work as well. And recollect, too, that it often happens when you are forgetting your own sorrows in the fictitious trials of the hero and heroine of your favourite drama, or are laughing at the jibes and jokes of the actors in a popular burlesque, that they may have sorrows that they have to hide behind a mask of mummery in order that they may please you and so earn their daily bread. But enough, Punch and Judy have their feelings, and so we will respect them. At the bigots who say hard things about *the* profession, we, being broad-minded individuals, can afford to laugh—they are self-condemned in these days. To the stage and its representatives we owe more than is ever confessed. Therefore, when we do peep behind the scenes, let us only take a very small peep behind those of the theatre, and not behind the scenes of a man's life—*we none of us could bear it.*

The object of all art should be to lift the real into the ideal in order that we may admire and learn beauties that

prosaic natures would never otherwise be able to grasp : by etherealising the commonplace and making the beautiful more beautiful. Few can read the book of nature, and fewer still the human heart ; and therefore, instead of seeking to learn the secrets we could never use ourselves, ought we not to be grateful to the genius that presents us with a conception which appeals to all the finer qualities of our nature, and makes the basest for the time being less base, if not almost noble ? Noble words inspire noble thoughts, and noble thoughts make men long to do noble deeds. But if we penetrate too far behind the scenes all nobleness fades away, and an unhealthy cynicism is apt to fill its place. As in the innermost room in our breasts where we keep undisturbed, unprofaned, the real secrets of our souls, the silent sorrows that we suffer, the cankers of despair and abandoned hope, where the tears lie unshed, evoked by the bitterest trials, the basest ingratitude, broken vows, shattered dreams ; our sweetness turned to gall and our love oft-times to hatred ; and all the troubles of our daily life drag us to the grave ; so in the artistic man's home lie his inmost thoughts, and the sacredness of his desires and ambitions should be revered, and his domestic life behind the scenes should never be pried into or disturbed.

## XX. .

### STAGE SUPERSTITIONS.

ONE would scarcely expect to find superstition developed to any marked degree amongst the followers of intellectual pursuits ; yet the theatrical profession, which is supposed to come under this rather obscure definition, literally teems with it. Not that individual members of the profession are in themselves more superstitious than other folk, but because, associated with the calling of "mummer," there are innumerable traditions handed down through all the Thespian ages, that actors and actresses tacitly respect, and in course of time come to believe in. The stage is naturally redolent of mouth-to-mouth reminiscences, about which clings that mouldy odour of respectability that seems to sanctify credence in the most improbable stories. Belief in certain omens and signs is not by any means confined to one portion or class of the profession, but affects high and low alike. And there are on the London stage at the present time men and women who most tenaciously hold to fixed opinions and superstitions that it is impossible for the average human being to comprehend. Indeed, Philistines have been known to laugh consumedly when various "incidents" connected with failures or successes have been seriously related. For many "incidents" will combine to make a success, and in truth act as a real genuine prophecy to those versed in the cult and able to read all the signs. As, for instance, if a black cat is found sitting in the auditorium of a theatre on the first night of a new play, or the *début* of a fresh actor,

before the audience is admitted, that play or that actor is bound to "go." The faith in this fancy cannot be shaken, and, consequently, black cats are cultivated and encouraged. In fact, every theatre keeps two or three cats, whose food is paid for out of the general treasury. But the black cat does not always bring good "luck," for, should a feline with a funereal coat attend any rehearsal of a forthcoming production, and leave the theatre before the rehearsal is over, that play, according to the wise ones, is doomed irretrievably, before it is produced. For a young author to be told this by an awestruck but fascinating little actress must be supremely cheering, and calculated to soothe his perturbed spirit.

The late Henry J. Byron, who wrote the never-to-be-forgotten *Our Boys*, was a particularly sensitive man, and hated superstition of all kinds, yet he was over-persuaded to lend his ear to the black cat theory, because on the eve of the production of one of his pieces, *Grimalkin*, who had attended and sat through, or rather slept through, all the rehearsals, was discovered curled up on a seat in the dress circle. But, as Byron pathetically observed, he had been chosen as the exception to the rule, for the comedy was a dire *fiasco*. Ever after he would not allow a cat anywhere near the theatre when he was about, which looks like superstition in the opposite direction.

Black cats, by the way, in private life, are not considered fortunate creatures to possess. Are they not supposed to be in the pay of the black fiend himself?

The "tag," or final speech, at the end of a new play is never, under any circumstances, spoken at rehearsal. To speak it is to court failure is the notion conceived for some unknown reason, or want of it, by all players. Consequently it is delivered for the first time on the first night. It is also considered unlucky for any one to peep at the "house" when the curtain is down, unless strictly from the prompt, or left

side. The culprit found looking from the right side would have a very bad ten minutes with any one who caught him. Porcupine penholders are held in great abhorrence, and are never admitted either on the stage in a play or in the theatre for ordinary purposes. Moreover, theatrical people are not alone in this peculiar aversion to the product of the fretful porcupine.

For an actress to wear a peacock's feather in her hat at rehearsal would subject her to little less than ostracism. What would happen if any person had the temerity to appear at night dressed for the piece with even a suspicion of peacock it is quite beyond the lay mind to conjecture. Some go so far as to predict a "frost" even if any one of the audience sport one of the hateful feathers. The same objection is attached to the colour green, and particularly to a green silk dress. No right-feeling actress would dream of wearing one, either in public or in a professional capacity. A charming little actress of my acquaintance told me this in a state of pious fervour. But what about the Irish dramas, and the "Wearing of the Green" in more senses than one? I fancy I have seen green skirts and ribbons at the Adelphi Theatre, in the Erin-and-water concoctions.

Light blue, on the contrary, is almost worshipped, on account of its presumably intrinsic value as a charm against all accidents and *contre-temps*.

Another whim used to prevail, but has recently been exploded through the agency of common sense and the desire to have things done properly—i.e., if matters generally went wrong at the final rehearsal, it was supposed to indicate that matters would go all right "at night." Indeed, "it will be all right at night" was almost a proverb in the dramatic world until active and intelligent managers scouted all ideas of leaving things to chance, though still the "glorious gospel of hap-hazard" is a creed that has too many disciples in the Thespian sphere. But then, actors and actresses are

not like other mortals ; so many live in a very narrow world, and breathe only their own atmosphere, and care nothing for aught beyond.

In common with the common worship of the horse-shoe, members of *the* profession, as followers of Momus and Melpomene delight to rather egotistically say, pay great reverence to the cast-off shoe, which was once held to be a protection from witches. Nearly every stage door in London and the provinces will be found to be decorated with one, either inside or out, and in some cases the dressing-rooms as well. Actresses are particularly susceptible to the charms (?) of the horse-shoe, and frequently carry one about with them in their "property" basket—in other words, the basket or box in which they convey their stage dresses when on tour. And many will own to having one affixed to some one door of their private residences. Of individual fancies there are no end, and an American actress recently ascribed her success to a little red silk bag given to her by a negress as a charm which she had worn for some time. This talisman is said to contain the chopped hair of a black dog, a pinch of salt, the dried eyes of a lizard, and the nails of a wild cat ! Another actress, English this time, wears a silver bracelet on the left arm night and day. Her only sister locked it there before leaving her to go to America to get married. The ship went down with all hands, and the key is with the drowned girl. This actress believes that if she were to take off the bracelet now, something dreadful would happen to her. This idea has certainly a sort of pathetic interest to recommend it that makes one forget the superstition in the poetry of the incident. I could tell you about many charms worn and carried by favourite London actresses, but it would be breaking confidences, and so I must refrain.

On the principle, perhaps, of Jack of all lines and master of none, actors maintain that any of the calling who play

all styles of "business" and character are never likely to reach the top of the tree, notwithstanding that instances to the contrary are uncountable, and it is only necessary to mention Mr. Irving, who in his early days went through the whole range of parts in the legitimate drama, in support of my statement. "Keep to one line" is their motto, which holds good in almost every profession but their own. One other prejudice is in reference to comedies and plays universally. If what is termed the "female interest" is weak—that is to say, if the plot does not largely revolve round the female characters and include numberless feminine virtues—few managers would venture to give such a piece a trial. And thus it is that many an excellent play that has afterwards achieved great popularity has gone begging. Yet what a quantity of good plays there are where the "female interest" is almost *nil*. In regard to new plays, there exists in some quarters the fallacy that, if the title of the piece leak out before it is almost ready to submit to the public, its chances of securing success are greatly reduced. Consequently the company engaged for its representation are bound down to assist the management in jealously guarding the vital secret. Sometimes, with all their care, the title does become known, and then a fresh one is chosen at the last moment.

Numerous instances of this nature will be remembered of late years in connection with various musical pieces. Friday, of course, comes within the category of theatrical superstitions. Actors object to sign agreements or commence rehearsals on Friday, and as for playing in a new play for the first time—well, it's downright flying in the face of Providence! There is record of only a few pieces being first produced on a Friday—except when Boxing Day falls that way in the usual course of the calendar—and they are all said to have been failures! That extraordinary and wayward genius, Sarah Bernhardt, who professes to believe in

nothing, postponed the reading of *La Tosca* because it was arranged for a Friday; and the production of the same play was delayed several weeks because she would not act with M. Volny, for whom Sardou specially wrote a part, for, she said, "He possesses the evil eye!"



## XXI.

### *THE LADDER OF FAME.*

I WAS feeling in a melancholy mood one night, harassed by disappointments and puzzling my head as to what the future would bring forth, and wondering whether, after all, the game was worth the candle, when I seemed to lose all knowledge of mundane cares, and travelled to the land of shadows, where I dreamed a dream that was not all a dream, for the vision was so natural and like unto our own everyday life that even now I cannot bring myself to believe that what I saw was aught but actuality and truth. And the more I think upon the subject, the more am I perplexed, dazed, convinced, and unconvinced again.

Perhaps my fitful, fantastic, and fanciful temperament, and castle-building propensities may account for my dream. I know not, and doubt if I shall ever be satisfied on the point.

I was sitting alone in my den by the fire, with my old cat Sloper cosily sleeping on the rug, and with my faithful companion, my pipe, was following the light blue wreaths of smoke curling and whirling away into unknowable space, watching the little ringlets slowly rising and quickly vanishing into the mystic infinitude of life-breathing air, and alike musing on the probabilities and improbabilities of life; speculating on what the years would be, whether the shadows would blend with the sunshine; wondering which would predominate, and whether that all-desired, never-satisfying phantom FAME would be mine, when I fell into a

profound slumber, or a deep trance, I know not which, if either, or, indeed, am I so perplexed, if neither.

Suddenly the air appeared to divide and open into a thin dephlegmated channel of empyrean sky-like blue. A multitude of finely defined objects and colours passed rapidly before me, changing like the ever-varying lights and shades of a gigantic human kaleidoscope. Rising from an immensity of never-ending universe was a Ladder of such marvellous proportions that the eye could scarcely take in the sides, and reaching so high that it seemed to lift miles into the clouds, and then it gradually grew narrow and narrower, and almost hidden at points by passing fleecy vapour, until the top was like unto a taper burning with a bright, uncertain, fitful lustre. Borne anon on the still, soft air that fanned my throbbing temples was a surging, clamorous sound as of a million congregated Babels resisting some mighty host.

I gazed down to where the Ladder appeared to have its foundation, and lo ! I saw such a concourse of nations and nationalities as man never saw together before. I saw all the countries of the earth gathered, as it were, indiscriminately at one spot ; gathered together in one seething mass of conflicting unity—of conflicting, horrible, struggling SELF—large-eyed, ravenous, and grasping. All and every seemed battling as with one accord, yet battling against one another, and battling for self, at all costs, at all risks. Wrangling, quarrelling, fighting, climbing, and clambering up this almost endless flight of steps, that seemed to tempt and compel them to ascend, and mock them when they fell.

Presently my attention was arrested by a party of young men, buoyant and happy with the gay and unrestrained enthusiasm of hopeful youth and sparkling ambitions. In fancy, I could hear the joyous and careless laughter as they flung aside their college caps and gowns, planted their feet firmly on the lowest rung, and eagerly, determinedly pointed

to the top, where the word FAME blazoned forth in dazzling splendour and electric glory.

Breathlessly I watched the four young men, clinging courageously to the steps; breathlessly I noted their slow but certain advance up the first few; nervously I saw the foremost one pause, stagger, and fall back. Then a shade fell o'er my senses, TIME, in the form of an implacable and greedy vampire, swung stealthily along, and when I looked again the four young men had vanished. Straining hard my sight I discovered them, all wearily struggling, but far apart; and still the murmurous moaning of the multitude whirled up from the distant depths.

Impelled by a force that I could not comprehend, I gazed again, and saw the ravenous horde of omnigenous mankind striving and driving up the ever-emptying, ever-filling Ladder, from eternal space to Eternity. I seemed gifted with the power of omnipercipience, and was able to see the four companions at one and the same time, though they were so widely separated and travelling in separate grooves up the Ladder. One I noticed with relentless strides crushing down all before him, treading the human forms that sickened and fainted and died in his path beneath his ruthless violence; rising, ever rising, upon the dead carcasses of those who had fallen by the way. And, though it was patent to all, for the whole world was fixed Argus-eyed upon him—patent to all that he rose on dead men's deeds and skeletons, and that he was utterly devoid of every honourable principle, yet was he applauded and cheered on his course.

I marvelled much at this, for as the climbers advanced their bodies became transparent, and their hearts and consciences lay exposed to view. The cause, promptings, object, and desire of every action could be seen and read in an instant; indeed, some of them wore their feelings outside, and did not attempt to disguise their sordid aspirations, which were shown as in a looking-glass. I was so surprised

that these men, with such ignoble rapacity of nature and wicked designs, should be so received by the populace, that I cried out in my disgust "Shame!" and I thought I heard the echo repeated, but it was immediately drowned in the yelling chorus of derisive laughter and deafening plaudits of praise, and the cheers became louder, and the greetings and smiles of the beautiful women assembled more sweet. And I saw the breasts of some of the most lovely and angelic-looking women open so that all could see that what their tongues uttered their hearts denied. Covetousness and passionate Self were painted on their breasts, and Gold was all the cry when tender Love was proffered.

The men worshipped them as the ideal, but, alas! in the majority the ideal was dead, and only the real, the hard, the commercial found haven in their hearts. Outwardly æsthetic and almost ethereal, inwardly grasping and of the earth earthy. I moved my pained orbs away, sick at soul, and sought for one other of the four friends. My eyes wandered over the motley crew of mortals that was passionately, cringingly, boldly, honestly, dishonestly, truthfully, lyingly hurrying onward up the steps that were as polished marble in their brilliancy and lubricousness. What a medley of men! What a mixture of mankind was there! The jaded politician, ridiculed by his friends and sneered at by his enemies; the artist, with his never-satisfied vanity and hopeless ambition; the sculptor, with his galled and statue-like sorrow; the man of business, with his never-ending scheming and race for wealth; the actor, with his petty pride and egotism; the man of letters, grown aged with waiting for the recognition and happiness that seldom come, sometimes through his own folly, sometimes not; the soldier, a prey to service and neglect; the poet, who goes singing but unsung to the sarcophagus of mortality, for so soon as he is gone he will be extolled and cried for; the sadful humorist, whose laughter drove a nation's care away, what

time the Andrew conceived his jokes in grief, and sent them from his aching head bathed in tears—all, all, the good, the bad, the indifferent, I saw them pass along; the fortunate and the unfortunate, the favoured and the forgotten. And for what? What compensation?

“ The Poet sings on the plain,  
The Trader toils in the mart;  
One envies the other's gain,  
One stares at the other's Art.

Yet each one reaches his goal,  
And the critic sneers as they pass;  
And each of the three in his soul  
Believes the other an Ass!”

And so they all jogged each other on the same interminable staircase! Urging upward with the same internecine power and resolution. And miracle of miracles, all their thoughts were laid bare to me; and as the workings of the hearts of these puppets were so vividly pictured to my sight, I could not help thinking, even in my semi- or wholly somnolent condition, of the fishermen in *Pericles*. “And how do the fishes live?”

“Why, as men do a-land: the great ones eat up the little ones.”

I marvelled that such things could be, that such men could live, all so different and yet all so much alike and similar in thought and deed; all with distinctive objects, yet all with the one purpose; all starting from diverse stations, yet all bound for the same terminus!

But all were not ignoble; there were grand men too on the staircase, who valiantly fought against adversity and rose honourably and honestly at their journey's end—the shining lights of the world, whose words are truth and whose actions are noble. Alas! so many of these passed too long unrecognised, and only obtained recognition when recogni-

tion was a mockery. This is the way of the world,—vice prospers while virtue dies for want of bread.

And now the vision became less definite; fruitlessly I endeavoured to trace, among the perspiring, haggard, and travel-stained crowd, the other three beings that I saw at the commencement. They were lost for ever in the bubbling, boiling urn of hollow, jeering humanity, and were numbered with the failures—the thousand millions of failures that have occurred and will continue to occur until the Crack of Doom. Once more I carried my eyes to the pinnacle of the Ladder where the glittering Fame still mockingly danced about like a Will-o'-the-Wisp, inviting the human butterflies to flutter for one brief hour before they are irrevocably singed, and as I looked, to my horror, a dimensionless trap opened and precipitated thousands and tens of thousands into the yawning gulf of chaos. And high above the din and turmoil of the myriad voices of pain and anguish I gave one terrific shriek and awoke.

And I know not whether I saw them in my dream, or whether I heard them, but indelibly imprinted on my mind, and to which I gave involuntary utterance, were these lines from Gray:—

“ The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Await alike the inevitable hour.  
The paths of Glory lead but to the Grave.”

And it was days before I could shake off the depression that seized me. How brief a span is man's existence! Many tears and little laughter, while Death stands by and fiddles for us to dance to his gruesome scraping. A few destructive years and all is done, and *sic transit gloria mundi—sic transit gloria mundi*.

## XXII.

### *A RAMBLE THROUGH BOHEMIA.*

#### I. GRUB STREET AND ST. PAUL'S.

LET us start at Ludgate Circus, at the foot of Brain Street, and let us gaze eastwards, and speculate on the distant Grub Street of the still more distant past. Poor Milton must have turned in his grave when some ignorant and bumptious official had the old Grub Street called after his name, for, indeed, some of the Grubbers were not a very choice or brilliant set of men. In Grub Street were fostered the most malignant satires that were ever penned, and disappointed and weak-minded literary moths, finding that they could gain little or no profit from their own effusions, took to vilifying the sterling work of others. None who were more successful than themselves escaped the wicked ribaldry of these discontents, and while they scribbled their attacks the tradesmen were dunning for the money they were so little likely to see, or the bailiff sat silent and sullen waiting for the settlement of his writs. But they were not all of this villainous description, though Pope, with that malignant spite which seemed to be part of his nature, lashed indifferently his enemies and supposed enemies, not forgetting his friends, and gave to Grub Street a reputation that reeked of his malice and their poverty and follies. There were genuine workers in Grub Street—writers who did their best to disseminate knowledge and amusement, to discover truth and expose the errors of past ages. And they have left their mark behind.

Dr. Johnson in his early days was frequently to be seen

perambulating up and down Grub Street, laying down the law and astounding his humbler craftsmen. In his Dictionary he defines Grub Street as "The name of a street in London much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called Grub Street,"—*mean* in those times being synonymous with small or ephemeral. The Doctor, too, famous for making original quotations for later ages to use and appropriate, observed once to a friend of Hoole, the translator of Tasso:

"Let you and I, Sir, go together and eat a beefsteak in Grub Street."

Many remarkable stories are related of the old houses in Grub Street, where so many writers fought against adversity. The one about the Grub Street Hermit who, with an income of over a thousand a year, secluded himself from the world for forty-four years, is well known. But Grub Street exists no more, and Grub Street hacks no longer congregate in one thoroughfare to dwell, but rather seek such seclusion as their humble garrets in and about lower Bohemia permit.

From Grub Street we pass to Cheapside, and linger in memory at the Old Mermaid Tavern, where it is said Shakespeare, the Master of all Bohemians, would sip his sack and dally with wit in company with such congenial companions as Rare Ben Jonson, Sir Walter Raleigh, Beaumont, Fletcher, Selden, Cotton, Carew, Donne, and many others of like kidney. The wit combats at the Mermaid are immortalised in Beaumont's celebrated epistle to Ben Jonson:

"What things have we seen  
Done at the Mermaid! Heard words that have been  
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame  
As if that every one from whence they came  
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,  
And had resolved to live a fool the rest  
Of his dull life."



And much more to the same purpose. The Mermaid was destroyed in the Great Fire.

Round about St. Paul's Churchyard, and in Paternoster Row, literature has ever found a home since the earliest days when printing was invented, and some of the oldest publishers in the world were established in the district, notably Longmans, "At the Sign of the Ship," in 1724, and Rivington & Son, whose business has recently been purchased by Longmans and amalgamated with their own, who published books, chiefly of a religious nature, at "The Bible and the Crown," in the Churchyard, even prior to Longmans. In the Churchyard, at the Queen's Arms, David Garrick held a club visited by certain commercial gentlemen whose taste he consulted as to the bent of the theatrical likings of the city. In the Row, also, close to the site of Dolly's Chop House, stood the Castle Tavern, kept by Richard Tarleton, Shakespeare's friend and fellow-actor, who was one of Queen Elizabeth's jesters. Shakespeare wrote many of the quaint "tag" and other songs in his plays for this comedian to sing.

And on the opposite side of St. Paul's Churchyard, not far from the street that leads to Chain Pier, was Paul's Walk, where the dandies and do-nothings from the time of Henry IV. were wont to take their daily strolls. It was more often called Duke Humphrey's Walk, and here literary hacks and hangers on to the fringe of literature, dependents of the booksellers, actors, authors, and journalists, together with nondescripts and loungers of all degrees, paraded up and down, and those whose purse was lighter than their hearts were first initiated into the mysteries of being a guest of his Grace Duke Humphrey. So far back as 1628 Robert Hayman wrote this "Epigram on a Loafer":

"Though little coin thy purseless pockets line,  
Yet with great company thou art taken up;  
For often with Duke Humphrey thou dost dine,  
And often with Sir Thomas Gresham sup."

To dine with the Duke meant to dine on London fogs, and to sup with Sir Thomas Gresham meant star-gazing on an empty stomach, and retiring to rest in the same predicament. And now that we have recalled old Grub Street, let us turn to the new.

## II. BRAIN STREET AND THE TAVERNS.

Let us walk *up* Fleet Street—the Street of Brain, in the Land of Bohemia, where the mighty engines of the world's Press throb day and night without ceasing, fighting against Time himself. Brain Street, where the Fourth Estate reigns supreme, and exercises more power and influence over the country's destinies than all the Parliaments and crowned heads put together. Where the public pulse is made to beat, and where the public mind is agitated, calmed, and controlled. From the offices in its thoroughfare millions of papers issue daily to spread the news of the universe throughout the length and breadth of the land. And, naturally, in Brain Street, there is more intellectual work accomplished than was ever dreamed of in the Grub Street of long ago. In the busy hive of journalists of all grades the drone can find no place—all must work, many must drudge, and a few may achieve fame, but all must still peg away for dear life, and for the panting press and the greedy, never-satisfied editors and chiefs who are always eager to grasp and envelop everything in the capacious machinery of heart, mind, and science.

The very pavement vibrates with the intensity of the tension at which the whirling workers are kept; and the bustling Brains ever alert, ever evolving and ever anxious, go surging along on the tide that is always coursing at full speed; to instruct and inform the outer world, and bear it away on the breast of the stream onward, upward, and forward. There is no standing still in Brain Street, no retrogression, but always and only progression, improvement, and advancement.

And how rich and rare is the history of its glorious rise and successes! What giants in past times have trod along its causeway! What young giants are striding forward now! What marvellous associations cling to the few old tenements that remain, and what inspiring fuel for reflection and conjecture springs into flame from the ashes of the dead from which the new palatial edifices have sprung! Truly is the mighty organ, the modern Press, the greatest wonder of all ages, eclipsing the erstwhile accepted wonders of the world and making them appear as mere pigmies in comparison with man's stupendous invention that has put a girdle round the earth, and the way to knowledge in every hand.

Familiarity does not breed contempt in Brain Street—it does not breed contempt anywhere except for what is contemptible. The more you know Fleet Street, the more you love it, and worship at the shrine of its past glories, its present glories, and the glories to come. Think of its ancient hostels and coffee-houses, and the geniuses who have frequented them in their palmy days, and in the days when the leaves had fallen and the trees were bare. Not one step can be taken without some golden legend, some precious memorial arresting one on the hallowed ground. Take Shoe Lane, where the great Conservative paper, the *Standard*, has its offices. Do we not know that Shakespeare is linked to Shoe Lane through his acquaintance with John Florio, the Italian lexicographer and scholar, from whom he must have learned so much of Italian fiction, and, mayhap, heard from him the stories of *Cymbeline*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, and perhaps *Othello* as well. And then we have the celebrated Cogers' Discussion Hall, now degenerated and gone to Salisbury Square. At the original Cogers', in the parliament held there, were there not numerous speakers who rose to be orators in the other Parliament, and who made their mark generally—Judge Wilks, Judge

Keogh, Daniel O'Connell, the Irish patriot, and Curran, the witty and eloquent?

A little further on, in Gunpowder Alley, died in prison the cavalier poet Lovelace, whose love-ditties have rarely been surpassed for grace and charm—"To Althea," for instance. And the Ben Jonson Tavern, still a Press house for the humbler workers, whose history has been neglected so long that I fear 'twould be useless to attempt it now. But note, there have been Personages pass down the narrow passage to the rooms beyond!

Anon with many thoughts of many things, and casting a half-lingering glance across Fleet Street to the Dr. Johnson Tavern, as we wend our way along, regretting that we can only touch upon the most important places, we pass the imposing offices of the *Daily Telegraph*, and come upon the district sacred to Dr. Johnson, Boswell, and Oliver Goldsmith, and that most ancient and agreeable of all houses, the Cheshire Cheese. Johnson's connection with Bolt Court, Wine Office Court, and Gough Square is too well known to be written about here, therefore let us assail the portals of the Cheese and demand of the neat-handed Phyllis a glass of Salt's refreshing ale. Much food for reflection, and digestion too, waits us in the Cheese, for you can have a literary feast of the past, and a literary feed of the present, and it being Saturday, let us say some of the celebrated steak and oyster pudding, a weekly institution dating back farther than even the landlord, Mr. Beaufoy A. Moore, could swear to. When this homely house, with its sanded floor and old-fashioned arrangements and appointments, was first opened, the records give no facts. But conjecture, with a lively sense of the logic of what might have happened, insinuates with many excellent and mighty plausible reasons that Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, and many another playwright and play actor, in all probability slaked their thirst many a time and oft on their way to and from the Blackfriars Theatre. And it is

artfully, almost pathetically, asked if such a true son of Thespis and Bohemia as the other Bard was could be guilty of such an uncongenial act as to pass so inviting and cosy a house of call. Personally I don't believe he would. Ben Jonson was there constantly, and made one of the coterie who were everlastingly making epigrams and puns.

And what a lot of rhymsters have sung the praises of the Cheshire, inspired, no doubt, by the potent fire of the liquors and good fare. And the place has been described so often in paper, pamphlet, and book-form that I, for one, feel loth to undertake the task, so shall only confine myself to the personages and associations.

It is sufficient for my purpose that the Cheese is the correct Cheshire as far as Bohemia goes, and it goes everywhere. Art and literature have been, and are, well represented there. They still proudly show the corner in the dining-room where Dr. Johnson sat and talked, and Boswell listened, and Goldsmith nervously asked questions of the great man, occasionally making a racy rejoinder that took their breath away, for poor old Goldy was no great conversationalist. And where David Garrick and Sir Joshua Reynolds joined them and partook of a bowl of punch made after the Doctor's own recipe.

The unfortunate Chatterton visited the house, and many other poets of past and present times have drunk of the cup that cheers and exhilarates. And shall we not own ourselves to having felt calmer and more benevolent after a good meal suitably accompanied by inspiriting liquids at the Cheese? And once did we not have a vision of vanished forms and faces visit us while waiting at the Cheese, conjuring up all the great and clever men who had sat in the best room—a vision that only lasted while a chop was being cooked? and yet how vivid and real and interestingly sad it all was!

Thackeray, Dickens, Douglas Jerrold, Shirley Brooks, Albert Smith, Tom Hood—they all used the house.

That prince of journalists, George Augustus Sala, used to often go to the Cheese, and journalists, authors and actors (occasionally) still go there to eat and drink and be merry, and set their wits a-flying. It is the correct cheese to do so, you know :

William, the waiter at the Cheese,  
To all your orders calleth "Yessir" ;  
"Though foreign foods and drinks may please,  
This, Sir, is the English Cheshire."

Yes, that is the beauty of the Cheese, the fare is so essentially English. And now we must move on again, leaving this literary haunt with a parting benediction.

We pass the many Press houses that abound ; we see the *Daily Chronicle* down the street, and the *Daily News* up the street. We remember the "Rainbow," the first coffee-house in the street, and Peele's and "Anderton's" and "Dick's," and many another, but we cannot deal with these to-day.

We think of the "Devil Tavern" hard by St. Dunstan's, immortalized by Ben Jonson, and hasten along until we come to where the old "Cock" stood until a few years ago. (The proprietor has opened another house with the same title on the opposite side of the road.) It was built away back in 1600, and is referred to in Defoe's "History of the Plague" as "The Cock Alehouse at Temple Bar, 1655." Wicked old Pepys used to take Mrs. Knipp, the actress, there, where the couple "drank, eat a lobster, and sang and mighty merry till almost midnight." But the Cock is not mentioned by many writers, and chiefly deserves a line here as having been made deathless by the Poet Laureate in "Will Water-proof" :

O plump head waiter of 'The Cock'  
To which I most resort,  
How goes the time ? 'Tis five o'clock,  
Go fetch a pint of port."

And further on, in the same piece of playful verse :

“ But whither would my fancy go ?  
How out of place she makes  
The violet of a legend blow  
Among the chops and steaks.”

But otherwise it was a house more frequented by City men, and the gay laugh of the humorist was seldom heard. Therefore let us, before leaving Fleet Street, turn back to the Mitre, another house used by Johnson and his friends; and although the original place was closed in 1829, the present one stands on a portion of its site, and Press-men still come and go there. And the anecdotes that could be told of the first Mitre would fill a volume.

And now I think we will leave the roar and rattle of Brain Street and steal leisurely along the Strand.

### III. THE HOPE AND DESPAIR OF AMBITION.

In no thoroughfare in the world does so much talent and genius and mediocrity pass and meet and rub shoulders daily as in the Strand. In no thoroughfare are there so many brilliant hopes and aspirations fostered and fed; in no thoroughfare is desperate Despair seen to creep along and attempt to hide its head as in the gay, the volatile, the classic Strand. It is the meeting-place of the successful and the unsuccessful in all grades of Bohemia—the intellectual and social market and exchange of London. It is the high-road to Fame, where Olympus, the Muses, Melpomene, and Thalia hold court for those who know the route and the pathway: of misery to those who have missed the golden opportunities that come, they say, to all. The happy-go-lucky and the plodders jog each other at almost every turn, and the rich and prosperous man is followed by the down-at-heel. And the road that to some has proved paved with gold, to others has only meant cold, unsympathetic stones that have echoed

the uncertain time of their own uncertain footfalls, and have cried out with mocking irony in the vernacular of the day, "Stone-broke, stone-broke, stone-broke!" Alas! poverty and prosperity are separated but by one step, and yet how far are they apart! The easy-going and the jocular hide their cares as best they may, the melancholy and pessimistic despond and droop, and in course of time are missed from their accustomed haunts. So many join in the race in which there are so few prizes that it is no wonder the vast majority go to the wall.

With brilliant hopes, a gallant band  
Have thoughts at Fame of being landed;  
Alas! those travellers in the Strand  
Too often find that they are stranded!

As Fleet Street is noted for its taverns and newspapers, the Strand and its environs is noted, and has been since the days of Charles I., for its theatres. It is the home of the drama and the haven of the dramatists; and, as everybody knows where the Temples of Thespis are to be found, there is no need to refer to them further. So let us just see what sort of refreshment houses the mummers have patronised and patronise. Russell Street is close by, and at the Albion, at one time, could be seen, after the night's work was done, and sometimes before it was begun, many actors, unknown then, who have risen to be the reigning favourites of the day. And fifteen years ago, and less, it was quite a celebrated house, with its familiar boxes that would just hold four comfortably, and where one could entertain a small party to a well-served supper, with drinks and smokes to follow. "The Albion" was the legitimate successor of the old coffee-houses of ancient history—"Wills's" and "Button's," and such like. A few doors away in the same street stands "The Harp," another once well-supported theatrical house, and where is still held, though not with the same enterprise as in its pristine period, a society or club called "The City of Lushington," presided



over by a "Lord Mayor" and four "Aldermen." Certain burlesque ceremonies of municipal elections are still continued at certain specified intervals, when much *bonhomie* and good humour prevail. Covent Garden was the happy hunting-ground of the coffee-houses and taverns which peeped in and out among the great houses of famous people, for, once on a time, it was the most fashionable neighbourhood for the best people, and especially did well-to-do Bohemians make it their dwelling-place and rendezvous. Dickens' love for Covent Garden is well known, and the Master Fictionist Thackeray esteemed it in no less a degree, as his happy phrase, the "Glorious neighbourhood of Covent Garden," will testify. The whole place bristles with reminiscences and memorials of departed wits and clever men, as every sweet girl graduate will be able to tell you. And if you would like to see the tombs of some celebrated men, stroll into the churchyard of Inigo Jones's barn-shaped church, St. Paul's, at the western end of the market, and read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. "Tom's" was another noted coffee-house, and so was the "Bedford," which later was converted into a tavern, and then with the Shakespeare next door it was turned into the oft-bepraised Evans's. It was at Evans's that the historical Beefsteak Club eventually, after many removals, found a home. (It is now located next door to Toole's Theatre, in King William Street, Strand.) Its praises have been well sung by that poetical and military Bohemian, Captain Morris, who was the laureate of the club. Nothing but beefsteak, onions, and potatoes, with port wine, were ever served, and to belong to the club you had to be "somebody." Evans's was best known for its songs and its suppers, presided over by Mr. Paddy Green. The Savage Club once sojourned at Evans's, after which the Falstaff Club had a brief reign, and, last of all, the New Club, which has just been disbanded, and so Evans's glory has departed! But if you want to know all about Evans's, read your Thackeray. Then in

the eastern corner is the Hummums, which, in the rebuilding, has swallowed up the time-honoured Rockley's.

And now let us say a word or two about that comfortable old hotel, more like a club than anything else, the Tavistock. No ladies, under any pretence whatever, are admitted; and if they keep servants of the female persuasion the man who has seen them must be dead, for no one has ever mentioned catching a glimpse of so much as a frill there. It was erected in 1787, and rebuilt in 1887. You can obtain the best English hospitality with real English food, cooked by the English method, at the Tavistock, the only thing foreign being the wines, which are asserted on all sides to be excellent. In its early days it counted amongst its customers many who made their name on the stage, in literature, and in art. And not infrequently English and American novelists and dramatists are to be met in the library, or smoking-room, or dining-room, discussing the topics of the day and the food for the inner man. The tavern style of doing things—honestly, mark you, and well—is the boast of the Tavistock management, and long may it thrive and prosper accordingly.

But the Strand is waiting, and we must away. Unfortunately, modern improvements have so upset all ideas of comfort in the latter-day taverns that too many of them are merely swilling palaces. And houses that were once famous as theatrical and Bohemian resorts are so metamorphosed that one fails to recognise them. In a previous sketch I fully described the old Occidental. Close by where that stood, Simpson's still remains, smiling at Exeter Hall, which only priggishly frowns back—an old house well known to mummery and quiet gentlemen fond of a game of whist. Then farther down is a house, for years kept by Walter Joyce, the versatile comedian, who used to gather round him the choicest and wittiest men in the metropolis of Music and Art. But the Demon Builder came along, and a change came o'er the scene; and though mummery and writers go there still, the

place is not what it was. Romano's still flourishes in a way ; but perhaps the best and most Bohemian restaurant and hotel in the Strand is Darmstatter's, next to the Vaudeville. Here still congregate actors, and authors, and journalists, musicians and artists, with a sprinkling of others who do not belong to either profession. For at Darmstatter's—and who does not know the genial Darmstatter himself?—at Darmstatter's you can obtain a good dinner, a good meal of any kind, at moderate prices, and a good selection of wines and spirits. Its reputation stands high, and many a "big gun" has dined there and wined there, and many an afternoon has joyously been spent in easy chat and comfort. It is called the Läger Beer Saloon now. The tiny old Gaiety bar, downstairs at the Gaiety Theatre, many will remember, with feelings of regretful pleasure, as being at one time the most patronised of all cosy drinking and chatting divans, where so many clever folk foregathered ; that also is no more, though the present Gaiety bar everybody knows.

And this almost exhausts the Strand taverns of any note. There are others, it is true, that I could name ; but the years have changed them so much that they can scarcely be said to belong to the Land of Bohemia. It was time that clubs should be started, and now it is almost only at the clubs that one can mingle with the celebrities of the day. The Garrick and the Green Room Clubs are, perhaps, the most exclusive theatrical clubs ; and then there are the Arundel, the Yorick, the Crichton, and others which may be termed of a mixed nature. The Savage Club is one of the oldest and best known in London, and only men moving in the higher walks of Bohemia are admitted. Journalists, authors, and poets are, perhaps, in the ascendant as when it started, but there are numbers of actors and musicians as well. However, I have no desire to sing the praises of the clubs or write a guide to them, and so of the other literary and artistic clubs known to all the world I will say nothing.

If to some it may seem that I have dwelt too much upon the subject of taverns, old and new, it must be remembered that in the days gone by there were no clubs of any standing to meet the requirements of the workers in the world of Literature and Art, and at one period the taverns actually were used as clubs, and more particularly the coffee-houses. When clubs began to come into favour, there were still those who were debarred from joining on account of their uncertain movements—travelling from town to town, and being in London, perhaps, only one month in the year. And there were, and are, many who cannot afford to pay the subscriptions—those, I mean, who are yet struggling up the ladder where *Kudos* twinkles at the top. And there are many who would never join a club if they could.

And in this association we must not forget Shenstone's pungent lines, not so true of to-day perhaps as of yesterday, but still worthy of cynical recollection :

“ Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,  
Where'er his stages may have been,  
May sigh to think he still has found  
The warmest comfort at an Inn.”

It also must be remembered that in describing Bohemia I have spoken more in the past tense than in the present or the future, and so to these we now will turn.

#### IV.—COMMERCE AND ART.

Before writing *finis* it will only be fair to glance at that easy-going artistic colony that existed in the neighbourhood of Fitz-Roy Square, and still exists in a sort of apologetic manner. Artists of all grades once made it their hunting-ground when they commenced to climb the tree—it was so convenient and cheap, and the old-fashioned houses were so built that top rooms and side rooms could easily be turned into studios, into which the light of day could exultingly

penetrate. And here congregated the earnest workers and the lazy, the energetic and the careless, living for the most part from hand to mouth, on hope and small commissions from rascally Jew picture-dealers. Somehow, Art in all its phases always goes hand in hand with adversity in the early days of those who aspire to rise and make a name; and no matter whether you be artist, author, or actor, while you are fighting a bitter battle with poverty and against vulgar, ignorant priggishness, you are looked upon askance by your kind friends and dear relations and Society at large. You are scarcely deemed respectable until you have got a picture in the Academy, or a book on the market, or are playing a big engagement in London. Alas! while all men and women worship Mammon so assiduously, Art will always hold a secondary position, and the only "respectable" people in this world will be those whose god is the golden calf, and whose object and aim are commerce. And the commercial spirit is so powerful in England that it is debasing, demoralising, dethroning the nobility of manhood, and making the nation one horrible mart of money, misery, and usury. Commerce, when it is made the chief end of existence, goes against all laws, human and divine.

Artists are still to be found striving for fame and recognition in certain quarters sacred to themselves, though many now elect to live away from the hubbub of the metropolis. Indeed, the suburbs being so easily reached, are now greatly patronised by members of all the "polite" professions as places in which to found their homes and do their work, or to retire to when the day and night's work is over.

And the artistic beauty and enchantment of some of these homes make them like fairy dreams to the jaded worker, and prove the enormous advantages of the culture and refinement that have sprung into life during the latter part of this nineteenth century.

## V.—CONCLUSION.

Although those who seek the bubble reputation at the Shrine of Fame still have to slave and struggle and battle with friends and foes alike, the Bohemia of to-day is an enormous improvement upon the Bohemia of yesterday. The shabby-genteel, and the spongers, and the ne'er-do-weels are not so conspicuous as of yore. The philosophy of clothes has been put to practical tests, and would-be eccentrics find it pays better to wear a decent garb when paying addresses to the Muses. And undoubtedly the status all round has improved. Writers necessarily have ever been educated men, and men of parts, and, almost without exception, gentlemen—a ridiculous and elastic word in these days, by the way, when all third-rate sort of individuals, with nothing whatever to recommend their pretensions, declare themselves gentlemen. Of course there were black sheep everywhere, and unscrupulous persons as well in all the sister arts, and these were the ones who brought the professions into disrepute, and none suffered so much as the good and honourable actors among the bad, the needy, and the illiterate. Yes, the drama has made wonderful strides of late years, thanks to the energy of those in high theatrical places. And, altogether, Bohemia is quite a different land to what it was fifty years ago, when the indigent preyed on the provident, and lived shiftless, aimless, and useless lives. Now, instead of being sneered at by the empty-headed noodles and the fools and fops of fashion, Bohemia, embracing the highest forms of Art, Literature, and the Drama, is looked up to with that respect and veneration that is ever the due of those who strive to inculcate the principles of beauty of all matters artistic and æsthetic; to cause an interest in all that appertains to intellectual pursuits and pastimes; and to raise the standard of universal learning, and the advantages of having some other object in life than

the scraping together and hoarding up of wealth for spend-thrift sons and reckless daughters to waste. What a happy country this would be if every individual person born into it were compelled to earn their money in some way or the other! How speedily would the talented and the persevering and deserving gain their right position, and drive the drones to the wall! But enough. In Bohemia there are so many bright spots, and so many real, unaffected, unconventional pleasures and enjoyments, unconstrained by the hypocritical cant of assumed superiority and virtue, that I am convinced the true life and the best life in this world—and we know not what may come after, so let us enjoy the present—is the Bohemian life, not the indifferent, lazy, and objectless that some lead, but the life that means work first and pleasure after, and happiness and tolerable content always. All must be clever without being pedantic; all must be honourable, and all must live goodly lives; and so *Vive la Bohemia. Vale!*

THE END.

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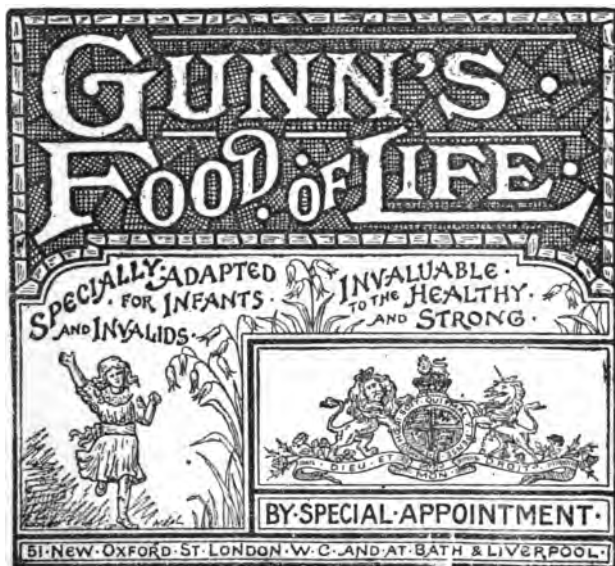
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